The growth of an Austrasian identity

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The growth of an Austrasian identity

Processes of identification and legend construction in
the Northeast of the *Regnum Francorum*, 600-800

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Abbreviations and references

AASS	*Acta Sanctorum*
AMP	*Annales Mettenses Priores*
ARF	*Annales Regni Francorum*
BBKL	Biografisch-bibliografisches Kirchenlexikon
CMSA	Center for Medieval Studies Amsterdam
DLH	*Decem Libri Historiarum (Gregorii Turonensis)*
HGF	*Historia vel Gesta Francorum* (reconstructed in "Die Fredegar-Chroniken", R. Collins)
IMC	International Medieval Congress (as held annualy at Leeds University)
LHF	*Liber Historiae Francorum*
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
MGH DD MER	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Diplomata regum Francorum e stirpe Merovingica*
MGH Epp	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae (in Quart)*
MGH LL	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Leges*
MGH SS	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (in Folio)*
MGH SS Rer. Lang.	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum*
MGH SSRM	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*
MGH SSRG	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum*
NDB	Neue Deutsche Biographie
PL	*Patrologia Latina*

Concerning the references to the narrative sources in the footnotes, the following remark is in order. In all cases where the sources are subdivided into *capita*, the references are to those rather than to page numbers. *Capita*-numbering is less prone to change than page numbering, which varies per edition. Besides, most translations maintain the original *capita* division. References to *capita* in the footnotes are indicated by "c.", followed by the number of the *caput*. All other numbers specifying passages within sources and literature refer to page numbers.

Preface

The notions and ideas which are worked out in this thesis have been long in growing.
As a young student at Leiden University, in the mid seventies of the last century, I became fascinated by things Merovingian through a course of lectures on Gregory of Tours. Other courses opened my eyes to the work of Fredegar. In later years, while committing myself fully to my professional life – first as a history teacher and, following that, a civil servant – I spent much of my spare time studying the history of Merovingian Francia, focussing increasingly on Austrasia. Gradually I conceived the notion of a specific Austrasian contribution to the course of VIIIth- and IXth-century history. Here lay the roots of the concept of "Austrasianness" which I address in my book.

Things accelerated when, in 2000, following some sweeping changes in my personal life, I decided to work out in a thesis the ideas which had been gathering in my head for almost a quarter of a century. This decision immediately led to two things. First, I got into contact with Dick de Boer, Professor of Medieval History at the University of Groningen, who had been one of my teachers at Leiden University so many years before and who now proved willing to become my supervisor. Second, I was confronted with numerous new developments in the field of medieval studies which had often passed by me and with which I now had to make myself familiar. Yearly attendance at Leeds University's International Medieval Congress, as well as participating in academic activities in the Netherlands helped me become once again conversant with current theory and practice in medieval history. I am grateful to the many medievalists I met at these occasions for all the things they taught me, both in formal and in informal settings.

Having said this, I should express my special gratitude to Dick de Boer and Karl Heidecker, who both critically supervised my work and at the same time inspired me to persevere at a time when my personal life was, once again, thoroughly upset. This helped me complete the book which is in your hands. Of course, I alone remain responsible for errors or misconceptions that are still in it.

I dedicate this study to my wife Marjan and to my mother. They have been waiting a long time to see it completed and yet never wavered in their support for this undertaking.

Hans Stegeman
Amersfoort, 23 February 2014

I. Introduction

Section 1. The object of this study: Austrasian identity, Austrasian territory and its dynamics

1.1. An Austrasian identity?

Austrasians first mentioned

It was Gregory of Tours who first mentioned the term. Writing in c. 590 about the hapless career of Merovech he reports how the *Austrasii* had, some fifteen years before, turned away the unlucky prince when he sought refuge with them.[1] This is the earliest known mention of "Austrasians"; Gregory is obviously referring to leading aristocrats of the North-eastern "Teilreich" of the *Regnum Francorum* where, at the time, Childebert II was king.[2]

From Gregory's time onward the name "Austrasians" became fairly common. It remained in use until well into Carolingian times.[3] But who or what did Gregory and later writers mean when they mentioned *Austrasii*? Who were the *Austrasii*? How did they think and feel about themselves? What was their experienced identity? Did they have – or develop – an Austrasian group identity? And if so, what did this identity mean within the wider context of Frankish history? How were they regarded by others?

Assuming there actually was such an identity in the period between the late VIth and the early VIIIth century – we could term it with a neutral term: "Austrasianness" – we may ask ourselves for what reasons, how and in which direction it developed.

Identity may be constructed – as actually happened to some extent in the case of the Austrasians. Also, identity may be attributed by others. In the

1 Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SSRM 1.1 (Hanover 1951) (hereafter *DLH*) V, c.14.

2 *DLH*, V, c.14; The fugitive Merovech is intending to join his wife queen Brunhild (*Brunichildem reginam*) but is turned away by "Austrasians" (*se ab Austrasiis non est collectus*). To have been in a position to turn away their queen's husband, these Austrasians in all probability were very influential men.

3 *Annales regni Francorum*, F. Kurze ed., MGH SSRG 6 in usum scholarum (Hanover 1895), in the entry for 778, one last time mention the *Franci Austrasiorum*.

Austrasian case, an example of the latter is provided by the Burgundian author who, c. 680, labelled some Austrasian leaders "a foolish and nearly pagan people".[4] But this is hardly the way to describe our concept of "Austrasianness".

An Austrasian "Kulturraum"

Identity as it is addressed in this study is to be considered in the neutral sense as it is conveyed by the concept "Austrasianness". It is not an ethnic identity. We are studying the identity of elite groups living in the North-East of the *Regnum Francorum*. They did not form a specific ethnic conglomerate we could define as "Austrasians", so ethnicity is not applicable in this case. It would be more useful – if not completely matching our subject – to speak about a cultural identity. And it is important to realize that perception is everything here. Austrasians need not share a cultural identity – in fact they did not –, rather it is their perception of some crucial shared characteristics which enables them to refer to themselves as *Osterliudi*.[5] The German concept of "Kulturraum" more or less covers the approach chosen in this study. In Austrasia there occurred, between c. 600 and c. 800, a process that could be styled "Kulturraumformung": a conscious as well as unconscious manipulative formation of the mental paradigm of a cultural area through political and social-cultural actions and actors.[6] Indeed in this study, we will see many actions unconsciously contributing to the formation of an Austrasian "Kulturraum". Also in this study, we will meet with conscious manipulative formation of a mental paradigm, e.g. in the case of hagiographical legend construction in the VIIIth century. At the same time, though "Kulturraumformung" provides a useful concept with which to address the emergence of "Austrasianness" – specifically when applying an approach in which the understanding of processes of identification is based on meticulous text analysis (see subsection 1.3, below) –, we should realize that, apart from this approach, Austrasian identity also developed as a result of elite groups forming alliances to further their material and

4 *Passiones Leudegarii*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 249-362, 7 (translation: P. Fouracre and R.A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France. History and Hagiography 640-720* (Manchester 1996)); *… stultorum et pene gentilium depravatus consilio, ut erat iuvenile levitate praeventus, subito quod per sapientium consilia confirmaverat refragavit.*

5 *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. B. von Simson, MGH SRG in usum scholarum 10 (Hanover and Leipzig 1905) 4.

6 This is my own adapted definition of a concept coined by Jürgen Joachimsthaler. J. Joachimsthaler, 'Die Literarisierung einer Region und die Regionalisierung ihrer Literatur' in: *Regionalität als Kategorie der Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main 2002) 19-49.

territorial interests.[7] In this study, the "cultural" approach will prevail. What was meant, in the VIIth and VIIIth centuries, when people used the words "Austrasians" and "Austrasia"? The answer to this question is relevant for our view of Frankish history. In this study, I will show that the Austrasians and Austrasia, as they appear in historiography, either as a socio-cultural reality or as an ideological construct, provide a crucial element of continuity between the kingdoms of the Merovingians and the empire of the Carolingians and that the Austrasians evolved to become the main bearers of Carolingian imperial ideology – to which they contributed much. The development, throughout the VIIth and VIIIth century, of their identity is therefore a phenomenon which is fundamental to Frankish history. An effective understanding of this development is also required for an adequate treatment of the "Teilreiche".

Austrasianness, regional variation and "Teilreiche"

The study and analysis of the emergence of an Austrasian identity, "Austrasianness", in the period between 600 and 800 will provide a much-needed complementary perspective on the long dominant view that the repeated divisions of the *Regnum Francorum* among Merovingian princes were mainly inspired by dynastic expediency and should be understood from that viewpoint rather than from regional differences among the various "Teilreiche". It is certainly true that, as Ewig has it, the different Frankish kingdoms shared "profound roots with common concepts of justice".[8] On the other hand, Thacker goes too far – at least in the case of Austrasia – when he characterises the Frankish kingdom as "usually divided into component 'Teilreiche' which in the VIIth century in particular had fluctuating boundaries and unstable existences".[9] Closer to our new understanding of the situation are the observations by Cardot on the specific characteristics of Austrasia and their constancy through time,[10] and the appreciation of Wood, who allows for regional influences in Frankish legislation.[11]

Although Ewig's analysis of the consecutive divisions among Merovingian princes of the *Regnum Francorum* remains essential for

7 F.C.W.J., Theuws, 'Centre and periphery in northern Austrasia (6th-8th centuries). An archaeological perspective' in: J.C. Besteman, J.M. Bos and H.A. Heidinga ed., *Medieval archaeology in the Netherlands* (Assen and Maastricht 1990) 41-69. Further discussed in chapter 5.

8 E. Ewig, 'Die fränkischen Teilreiche im 7. Jahrhundert (613-714)', *Trierer Zeitschrift* 22 (1953) 85-144 (B). Reprinted in: H. Atsma ed., *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien. Gesammelte Schriften (1952-1973)* I. Beihefte der Francia 3 (Munich 1976) 172-230, 173.

9 A. Thacker, 'Peculiaris patronus noster. The saint as patron of the state in the Early Middle Ages' in: J.R. Maddicott and D.M. Palliser ed., *The medieval state. Essays presented to James Campbell* (London 2000) 1-24, 2.

10 F. Cardot, 'L'espace et le pouvoir. Étude sur l'Austrasie mérovingienne' (Paris 1987).

11 I.N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London and New York 1994) (B) 113-114.

our understanding, and although Ewig's perspective on the expediency laying behind the division processes, and on their consequences, brought plausibility into what had long been a badly understood and confusing process, more lies behind the phenomenon than just expediency and plausibility. There are grounds to add new elements to the concept of "Teilreiche" as it was developed by Ewig. Intrinsic differences between the various "Teilreiche" contributed more strongly than Ewig allows for to the dynamics and outcomes of the division processes. This is reflected, for instance, in the legislative reforms of 614[12] and 673,[13] notwithstanding the fact that the regional significance of these reforms is mainly denied by Ewig and others.[14] The source material often implies, and sometimes proves, significant "differences of culture" between Austrasia on the one hand and Neustria and Burgundy on the other. These did indeed bring about an increasing divergence between developments in Austrasia and developments elsewhere within the Frankish kingdoms. In a much stronger sense than Ewig allows for, origins and characteristics of the "Teilreiche" were closely connected to basic regional differences. Apart from expedient grounds – dynastic or otherwise – to subdivide Frankish lands, the development of specific identities added their own dynamics to the history of territorial partition. In this study, the development of "Austrasianness" will be traced. It will be shown that the concept of Austrasianness in the period 600-800 was substantial to such an extent that it far surpassed any short-term motives for dynastic divisions.

Lack of a contemporary Austrasian narrative

There existed many collective identities within the kingdoms of the Franks and throughout the period from Clovis to Charlemagne. Writing from the perspective of a Gallo-Roman gentleman from Auvergne, Gregory of Tours provides us with a perspective on VIth-century Aquitanian identity. Fredegar's VIIth-century texts reflect both Burgundian and Austrasian concepts and attitudes. The *Liber Historiae Francorum* offers a Neustrian point of view from the early VIIIth century. At the beginning of the IXth century the *Annales Mettenses Priores* present us with the classical views of mature Carolingian culture. That being said, we must at the same time conclude that testimony of this kind is extremely rare. Specifically Austrasia and the Austrasians seem to be hidden from our view much of the time. The "Ripuarian" parts of the Frankish territories – *i.e.* the land on the banks of the Rhine, specifically

12 *Chlotharii II. Edictum*, ed. A. Boretius, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, MGH LL Capitularia regum Francorum 1 (Hannover 1883) 20-23.

13 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 113.

14 Ewig, 'Die fränkischen Teilreiche', 173; Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 13 and Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 143.

around Cologne, where lived the Ripuarian Franks, as distinct from the lands of the Salian Franks further West; it is in the Ripuarian lands that we find the Austrasians from the late VIth century onward – have not much of a "native" historiography which would inform us on their self-awareness or identity.[15] Yet it was this region, with its leading groups, which became central to developments in Francia from c. 700 onward. This helps explain why modern historiography has often focussed on the dynamics and trends within the Ripuarian parts of the *Regnum Francorum*. In a sense, this started with the seminal work of Pirenne.[16] The work of K.F. Werner,[17] M. Werner,[18] Anton[19] and Parisse[20] opened many additional perspectives. Intriguing is the approach of Cardot, who sees Austrasia as a *regnum* where kingship, with its Germanic roots, learned to adapt itself to administrative structures dating from Roman times.[21] An important contribution to the study of Austrasia has been made by Theuws. He concludes that between 650 and 750 great changes occurred, when "lines of dependency emerged between (outlying regions) and Northern Austrasia".[22]
The current study intends to contribute to these perspectives by addressing the identity of the Austrasians as a formative impulse linking the Merovingian and the Carolingian context. As a first step, we will consider, in the next subsection, territorial characteristics of Austrasia. Following this, we will discuss ways to approach Austrasianness – *e.g.* by linking texts to identities or applying elements from the paradigm of ethnogenesis.

1.2. Austrasia as a territory

Constancy of Austrasia's Western border
In 511, following Clovis' death, the eastern part of the *Regnum Francorum* fell to Clovis' eldest son Theuderic – who, born of a mistress of Clovis,[23]

15 For a concise description of "Francs Rhénans (Ripuaires)" see: P. Riché, 'Dictionnaire des Francs', I (Paris 1996).
16 H. Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris and Brussels 1937).
17 K.F. Werner, 'Les principautés périphériques dans le monde Franc du VIIIe siècle', *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 20 (1972) 483-514.
18 M. Werner, *Der Lütticher Raum in frühkarolingischer Zeit. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte einer karolingischen Stammlandschaft* (Göttingen 1980).
19 H.H. Anton, 'Die Trierer Kirche und das nördliche Gallien in spätantiker und fränkischer Zeit' in: H. Atsma ed., *La Neustrie. Les Pays au Nord de la Loire, 650 à 850*. Beihefte der Francia 16 (Sigmaringen 1988) 15-38.
20 M. Parisse, 'Von Austrasien zu Lotharingien' in: M. Parisse ed. and H.-W. Herrmann ed. (German edition), 'Lothringen – Geschichte eines Grenzlandes' (Saarbrücken 1984) 101-134.
21 F. Cardot, 'L'espace et le pouvoir'.
22 Theuws, 'Centre and periphery', 41-69.
23 *DLH*, II, c. 28.

was not a son of Clothild, as were his three younger brothers Chlodomer, Childebert I and Chlothar I. Ewig's view that the assignment of the East to Theuderic reflected Clovis' intention to set up this prince – the eldest and therefore most experienced of the four heirs – in a strategic position, which would allow him to protect and maintain the *Regnum* as a whole, is plausible.[24] Yet there may have been an additional reason to allot the East to Theuderic.

Not long before, at the height of Clovis' rule, a certain king Sigebert at Cologne had ruled (part of) the eastern Franks or *Ripuarii*.[25] Sigebert had been wounded while fighting, as an ally of Clovis, in the siege of Zülpich. Since then he was known as Sigebert the Lame (*Sygiberthus Claudus*). Sigebert's son Chloderic later fought at Clovis' side at Vouillé. There, Clovis suggested to Chloderic that if Sigebert, being old and lame, were to die, the kingdom of the Ripuarii would fall to him, Chloderic. The latter thought he understood Clovis' hint and obligingly had his father murdered, grabbed his treasure and informed Clovis of the event. Characteristically, Clovis now had Chloderic killed and was raised on the shield by the Ripuarians, who therewith recognized him as their king.[26] What we learn from this is that in the early VIth century a distinct grouping, known as Ripuarians, had a king of their own. In fact, in the Vth and early VIth century such "Kleinkönige" were a common phenomenon.[27] Seen against this background, the awarding of the Eastern territories to Theuderic in 511 can partly be seen as an attempt to accommodate the Ripuarians and the Sicambrians – who were no doubt the ancestors of the later Austrasians – by providing them with a king of their own and with a distinct territorial domain. We know nothing of Theuderic's mother. In the case she came from the East, this may have been en extra element in his favour.

Ripuaria was in the VIIth century one of the *ducati* of Austrasia. According to Ebling[28] at least the following *ducati* may be recognised

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24 E. Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich* (6th edition; Stuttgart 2012) 31-33.

25 The *Ripuarii* were possibly first attested by Jordanes c. 551 in his Getica (v. 191), *Hi enim affuerunt auxiliares,Francae, Sarmatae, Armoriciani, Liticiani, Burgundiones, Saxones, Riparii, Olibiriones....* Wallace-Hadrill (Wallace-Hadrill, J.M., *Early Germanic kingship in England and on the Continent* (Oxford 1971) 16-17) gives the following geographical distinction, which seems a workable hypothesis: "... the Salians ... were the Franks of Toxandria, round the mouth of the Rhine ... Their neighbours on the Rhine (were) the Sicambri ... further east lay other Frankish tribes, notably the Ripuarians in the neighbourhood of Cologne".

26 *DLH*, II, c. 37 and 40.

27 On *regales* see *DLH* II c. 9. Wood 1994 (B) 36-38 provides an interpretation of Gregory's account suggesting that Gregory was confused by the apparent lack of continuity between the period of "petty kings" in the IVth and Vth centuries on the one hand, and the emergence of the Merovingian royal family in the subsequent period.

28 H. Ebling, *Prosopographie der Amtsträger des Merowingerreiches. Von Chlothar II. (613) bis Karl Martell (741).* Beihefte der Francia 2 (Munich 1974), 21.

in Austrasia up to the first half of the VIIIth century: Alsace, the "Ardennergau", Champagne, Hasbania, the "Moselgau" and Ripuaria. Ebling also mentions the *ducatus* of Auvergne, which made up the Aquitanian territory ruled by the Austrasian kings, but this is left out of consideration in this study, which focusses on the North-eastern part of the *Regnum Francorum*, Austrasia proper. Of the actual North-eastern *ducati* it is not clear, perhaps apart from Ripuaria, whether there was any continuity between these and the territories of earlier "Kleinkönige". Besides, according to Ebling, there probably were more Austrasian *ducati* besides those we know of.[29] And of course there were *ducati* beyond the Rhine, namely Thuringia. It is probable that the development of Austrasianness was strongly influenced by the different characteristics of the various *ducati* – characteristics, however, we nowadays can only guess at. Two relevant observations merit attention, though, in relation to political dynamics of VIIth-century Austrasia. The first is that many of the kingdom's leading aristocrats were *duces*: Grimoald's ally Adalgisel,[30] Pippin of Herstal's ally Martin (*dux* in Champagne),[31] his enemies and rivals Gundoin[32] and Vulfoald,[33] the shifty Adalrich Eticho (Alsace).[34] The second is that none of the VIIth-century Pippinids can be linked to a specific *ducatus*.

From 511 onward, when Theuderic I became king in the Eastern "Teilreich", the Western boundaries of this Eastern territory were, despite various conflicts about it, to prove – to a considerable degree – constant. This can be seen at the division following the death (561) of Chlothar I who, during the final years of his rule, had briefly reunited the *Regnum Francorum* under his authority. Five sons survived him: Charibert, Guntram, Sigebert (all three by Ingund) and Chilperic (by Aregund); plus Gundovald, the later pretender (by an unknown concubine).[35] Following an abortive coup by Chilperic and some tugs of war in which the four "legitimate" brothers strove to gain the support of various *leudes*,[36] they agreed on what Gregory calls a *divisionem legitimam*,[37] the outcome of which was very similar to the 511 partition. The former "Kingdom

29 Ibidem.
30 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, V.
31 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCXXXVII.
32 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CXCIX.
33 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCCXIII.
34 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, VIII.
35 R. Schneider, *Königswahl und Königserhebung im Frühmittelalter. Untersuchungen zur Herrschaftsnachfolge bei den Langobarden und Merowingeren*. Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 3 (Stuttgart 1972) 100 ff.
36 Schneider, *Königswahl und Königserhebung*, 89-92 on Eidesleistungen; *DLH*, IX, c. 20; references to 561 in the Treaty of Andelot.
37 *DLH*, IV, c. 22; Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 131-133 and Schneider, *Königswahl und Königserhebung*, 88.

of Theuderic" (*regnum Theuderici*), as it was significantly termed by Gregory, fell to Sigebert.[38]

There appears to be no special reason why (authority in) the East fell to Sigebert and not to one of his brothers. We probably should not attach great value to the fact that Sigebert bore the name of the Ripuarian king who had been murdered two generations earlier.[39] What is significant, though, is the stability of the boundaries between Sigebert's kingdom and the kingdoms of his brothers: at the 561 partition, this Western frontier of what was soon to be named the territory of the Austrasians ran along a course which was, in the main, identical to that of 511.[40] Sigebert's successors were to inherit and defend this frontier – with the enthusiastic support of the Eastern Franks, the *Austrasii*.

To jump forward two generations: an episode which occurred shortly after Chlothar II had made his son Dagobert I *consors regni* in Austrasia (623)[41] reveals just how strongly Austrasians at that time felt about frontiers and territorial matters. Fredegar tells us how in 625, at Clichy, "a serious quarrel (broke out) between Chlothar and his son Dagobert; for the latter demanded that all the lands belonging to the kingdom of Austrasia should be subordinated to him, and Chlothar stoutly refused to comply and would concede nothing".[42] Mark that it is Dagobert who is doing the demanding, doubtlessly urged upon by the Austrasians. Mark, too, that Fredegar explicitly refers to the *regnum Austrasiorum*; and how he concludes with satisfaction how, in the end, after mediation by a commission of twelve Frankish lords, among whom bishop Arnulf of Metz, the Austrasians acquired "all that belonged to Austrasia", whereas Chlothar kept "for himself the territory lying beyond the Loire and in Provence".[43] A comparable episode occurred some ten years later (633),

38 *DLH*, IV, c. 22; Gregory here also mentions the kingdoms of Childebert, Chlodomer and Chlothar, thus implying that the division of 511 still had legitimacy in 561.

39 Cardot 1987 suggests, however, that the identical names may have been no coincidence. F. Cardot, 'L'espace et le pouvoir', 187-188.

40 Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 31-33 and 41-42.

41 Fredegarius, *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici Libri IV. cum continuationibus*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 1-193.

42 Fredegarius, IV, c. 53 (All translations from Fredegar's Fourth Book used in this study are Wallace-Hadrill's – *Fredegarii liber quartus cum continuationibus. The Fourth book of the chronicle of Fredegar with its continuations*, ed. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (London 1960) – unless otherwise stated); ... *inter Chlotharium et filium suum Dagobertum grauis horta fuit intencio, petensque Dagobertus cuncta que ad regnum Austrasiorum pertinebant suae dicione uelle recipere; quod Chlotharius uehementer denegabat, eidem ex hoc nihil uelle concedere.*

43 Fredegarius, IV, c. 53; ... *reddensque ei soledatum quod aspexerat ad regnum Austrasiorum, hoc tantum exinde, quod citra Legerem uel Provinciae partibus situm erat suae dicione retenuit*. In fact the word *soledatum* might justify a translation different from Wallace-Hadrill's: "all (lands) that used to belong to Austrasia", thus strengthening the sense of territorial continuity of Austrasian aristocrats. The fact that the territoies beyond the Loire and Provence were kept out of the deal suggests that the Austrasian aristocrats may have felt less stronlgy about these more remote areas.

when Dagobert I and Sigebert III felt the need to explicitly confirm the frontier between Neustria and Austrasia with regard to a future division of Dagobert I's inheritance between Sigebert III and Clovis II. "Dagobert made an agreement with his son Sigebert on the advice and at the wish of the Neustrians. All the Austrasian magnates, the bishops and all the warriors of Sigebert swore with hands raised that after Dagobert's death Neustria and Burgundy should belong to Clovis while Austrasia, which had the same population and extent of territory, should be entirely Sigebert's".[44] The terminology is revealing. "*Quicquid ad regnum Austrasiorum iam olem pertenerat*" indicates a clear recognition of the principle of the historical tradition and the territorial integrity of the Austrasians' domains. In connection to this recognition, Fredegar presents Austrasia as *de populo et de spacium terre coaequans* to Neustria. The wording makes clear how Austrasians saw their rightful territory as rooted in custom (cf *olem*) and, in terms of demographic strength, the equal of the Western kingdom.

Conflict about Austrasia's Western border

The Austrasians' territorial awareness also played an important role in the wars in which Austrasia got involved in the VIIth century. In the great war of 612/613 territorial aspects were at stake. In a prelude to the conflict, Theudebert II of Austrasia invaded Alsace (610), which had been claimed up to then by his brother Theuderic II of Burgundy. The eagerness of the *exercitus Austrasiorum*[45] to support their king's move was striking, whereas the Burgundian king was only lukewarm supported by his followers and had to give in, loosing Alsace and various other regions.[46] When actual war began in 612, however, Theuderic succeeded in ousting his brother and took over Austrasia – only to declare war on his second cousin Chlothar II of Neustria on the issue of who would possess the duchy of *Dentelinus*. War was cut short because of Theuderic's sudden death and Chlothar's subsequent take-over in Austrasia and Burgundy. With respect to the Austrasians' territorial preoccupations and the role these played in their conflicts and wars, the duchy of *Dentelinus* may serve as a case in point. The duchy is only known to us through what Fredegar reports on it.[47] The territorial designation *Dentelinus* appears

44 Fredegarius, IV, c. 76; *... consilio Neustrasiorum eorumque admonicione per pactiones uincolum cum Sigybertum filium suum firmasse dinuscetur, at Austrasiorum omnes primati, ponteuecis citirique leudis Sigyberti manus eorum ponentes insuper, sacramentis firmauerunt ut Neptreco et Burgundia soledato ordene at regnum Chlodouiae post Dagoberti discessum aspecerit; Aoster vero idemque ordene soledato, eo quod et de populo et de spacium terre esset coaequans, ad regnum Sigyberti idemque in integretate deberit aspecere ...*

45 J.F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden 2002) (significance 4): The body of freeman, the nation when rallied.

46 Fredegarius, IV, c. 37.

47 Fredegarius IV, c. 20, 37-38 and 76.

to have been in use only in the period between c 600 and c 650. The *ducatus* comprised the cities of Arras, Cambrai, Thérouanne, Tournai and possibly Noyon.[48] This corresponds roughly to the lands of the Salian Franks at the beginning of Clovis' rule – which may or may not have lent a special connotation to the region. What, actually, did the name which Fredegar uses for the region, *ducatus Dentelini*, mean? Was it derived from a proper name, Dentelinus?[49] Be that as it may, when Chlothar II in 613 became sole king of the *Regnum Francorum*, Dentelin as a region remained an apple of discord between Austrasia and Neustria until 633, when Dagobert I once more confirmed the boundaries between the two kingdoms and decided that the duchy of Dentelin, which had been illegitimately (*iniquiter*) taken by Austrasia, belonged to Neustria. The Austrasian aristocrats – *omnes primati* – gave in, prompted by their fear of Dagobert.[50] No further mention is made of Dentelin but we may conclude, first, that both Neustrians and Austrasians obviously set much value by the possession of the duchy and, second and more significant, that in the territorial awareness of the two kingdoms' aristocracies the concept of legitimate possession played a crucial role. The ultimate loss of Dentelin to the Western kingdom at a time when the Austrasians felt vulnerable vis à vis the overmighty Dagobert may have contributed to the Austrasian preference to have a king of their own, who could defend their interests, instead of having to accept Neustrian rule.

The Eastern border of Austrasia

When discussing territorial aspects of Austrasia's VIIth-century wars, conflicts beyond the Rhine must be dealt with. Already in the previous century the Eastern Franks had looked eastward for expansion. Sigebert I in the 560's, accepting the responsibilities that came with ruling the East, had waged war against the Avars.[51] The campaigns may have strengthened his position with his eastern *leudes*, even though he seems, at one occasion, to have been made prisoner by the Avars – an event, however, which obviously brought with it the opportunity to conclude an honourable treaty.[52] Later, during the war of 612/13, Austrasia had

48 C. Mériaux, 'Thérouanne et son diocèse jusqu'à la fin de l'époque Carolingienne. Les étapes de la christianisation d'après les sources écrites', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 158 (2000) 377-406, 384.

49 There is a contemporary saint with the name of Dentelinus. He allegedly died in his infancy in c. 570 and would have been the son of Madelgarius, the founder of Soignies abbey (Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon, Band XVI, Spalte 376, author Ekkart Sauser).

50 Fredegarius, IV, c. 76, *terrorem Dagoberti quoacti.*

51 *DLH*, IV, c. 23 and 29.

52 *DLH*, IV, c. 29; *Nam, datis muneribus, foedus cum rege iniit, ut omnibus diebus vitae suae nulla inter se proelia commoverint, idque ei magis ad laudem quam ad aliquid pertinere opproprium ... pensatur.*

deployed Saxon and Thuringian warriors in the conflict.
Following 612/13, the new régime of Chlothar II and Dagobert I strongly asserted Austrasian authority in the East. The *Liber Historiae Francorum* reports a victorious war of Dagobert and his father against the Saxons, but the account is partly legendary.[53] Fredegar writes on Dagobert's fame beyond the frontier: "... his resolution spread such alarm that everywhere they (the peoples, *gentes*) hastened humbly to submit to him. Even the people who lived on the Slav-Avar frontier earnestly desired him to come to them. They confidently promised that he should dominate the Avars and the Slavs and all the other people, up to the frontier of the Roman Empire".[54] Dagobert installed Radulf, son of Chamar, as *dux* in Thuringia. Thus Radulf, who may have been a Frank from the region of Mainz, started out actually as a representative of the king rather than as a Thuringian leader.[55]
Following these seemingly auspicious beginnings, developments during the years 630-639 increasingly show the problematical character of Austrasian territorial claims in the East. In the first place, these claims were and remained disputed. In the second place, they were seen as an Austrasian problem; Neustrians and Burgundians were not inclined to invest much in maintaining the claims. As a consequence – and in the third place –, when things started to go against the Austrasians, they more or less gave up on the East and preferred to concentrate on more accessible prestige on their Western frontier. It is helpful to elaborate on these developments.
The report may start with Samo, the Frankish "merchant-adventurer" from Soignies (or Sens?), who went to the Slav frontier and became king of the Wends there in his own right (623-658).[56] Samo was no traditional aristocrat who could be managed through peer control. He developed into a formidable player who ultimately threatened Austrasian and Frankish interests. His unique case highlights the Austrasians' involvement with the East as it prevailed in the first half of the VIIth century.

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53 *Liber Historiae Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 215-328 (herafter *LHF*), c. 41.

54 Fredegarius, IV, c. 58; *Timorem uero sic forte sua concusserat utelitas ut iam deuotione adreperint suae se tradere didionem; ut etiam gente que circa limitem Auarorum et Sclauorum consistent ei prumptae expetirint ut ille post tergum eorum iret feliciter, et Auaros et Sclauos citerasque gentium nationes usque manum publicam suae subiciendum fiducialiter spondebant.*

55 Fredegarius, IV, c. 77; Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCLXI. The installation of Radulf may have coincided with the with the journey of Dagobert to the Thuringians on which, according to the *Vita Sancti Arnulfi* (caput 12), bishop Arnulf of Metz accompanied him.

56 Fredegarius, IV, c. 48; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The fourth book of the chronicle of Fredegar with its continuations* (London and New York 1960) 39 note 1. On early Frankish and Slav relations see W. Fritze, *Untersuchungen zur frühslawischen und frühfränkischen Geschichte bis ins 7. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main 1994).

Shortly after Dagobert moved his seat of government from Austrasia to Neustria, a vicious war broke out with Samo (630). The wording of Fredegar's report suggests that hostilities followed on a period of increased mercantile relations. "In this year (630) the Slavs ... killed and robbed a great number of Frankish merchants (*neguciantes Francorum*) in Samo's kingdom".[57] Now that a crisis had broken out, Dagobert sent a certain Sicharius as envoy to Samo to protest and to obtain compensation. Although Samo's answer was moderate if not quite satisfying, according to Fredegar it was Sicharius who, although presumably otherwise instructed, put things on edge by comparing the Slavs (or at least those who robbed merchants) to dogs, an offense which caused Samo, who up to then may have recognised Dagobert's suzerainty,[58] to throw Sicharius out of his presence. Dagobert now "confidently ordered the raising of a force throughout his kingdom of Austrasia to proceed against Samo and the Wends".[59] Mark that Dagobert, although by now ruling the whole Frankish kingdom, restricts the levying of troops to Austrasia, which may well have contributed to the Austrasians feeling mishandled by Dagobert when the war turned sour on them (see below). The king did not personally lead the campaign, presumably he remained in Neustria. In an effort to compensate for the lacking contingents from Neustria and Burgundy, Dagobert sponsored the Alamans and the Lombards to invade Slav territory from the Southwest and South (631?). They won some successes. But the Austrasians, after having marched due East for many days, got stuck before the Slav stronghold Wogastisburg and were beaten there after a battle lasting three days. They fled home, leaving everything behind.[60] At this point in his narrative Fredegar tells us that the Austrasians "saw themselves hated and regularly despoiled by Dagobert".[61] He also reports that the Austrasian defeat led to widespread plunder by the Slavs in Thuringia and adjacent districts. In Thuringia, *dux* Radulf will have fought on against the Wends.[62] But the Sorbs under their duke defected to Samo. Following the débacle of Wogastisburg relations between the king and the Austrasian magnates were beyond repair.

57 Fredegarius, IV, c. 68.

58 Ibidem; *Et terra quam habemus Dagoberto est et nos sui sumus...*

59 Ibidem; *Dagobertus superueter iubet de universum regnum Austrasiorum contra Samonem et Winidis mouere exercitum …*

60 Ibidem; the location of Wogastisburg is unknown. See on the different options: Water Pohl: Wogastisburg. In: Lexikon des Mittelalters. Bd. 9, Sp. 291.

61 Fredegarius, IV, c. 68; *... dum se cernebant cum Dagoberto odium incurrisse et adsiduae expoliarintur.*

62 Fredegarius, IV, c. 77; *Radulfus dux ... pluris uecibus cum exercito Winedorum demicans, eosque uictus uertit in fogam.*

Fredegar is aware of this – and his sympathy lies with the Austrasians.[63] The next year (631) the Wends continued the war and invaded Thuringia.[64] This time Dagobert marched East himself with the Austrasian levy – but now also accompanied by a "corps of picked warriors from Neustria and Burgundy".[65] He did not operate successfully. Having arrived at Mainz, he tried to buy Saxon military assistance by honouring their request to abolish, in return, the annual tribute of five hundred cows levied on them since the days of Chlothar I. When next the Saxons failed to deliver on their promise, it was not forgotten that Dagobert had acted in this matter "on advice of the Neustrians" – as Fredegar emphatically reports.[66] We may assume that this led to irritations between Neustrians and Austrasians. Next, the king returned to Neustria. Among Austrasians and in the East, his reputation was in shambles. For the year 632 Fredegar reports that "the Wends, on Samo's orders, were raiding widely and often crossing the frontier to lay waste the Frankish kingdom".[67] Again a year later, in 633, Dagobert, looking for a structural solution to the crisis, made his infant son Sigebert III coregent in Austrasia; he had no choice but to install the boy at Metz and provide him with part of the royal treasure. Following his report on these events, Fredegar writes: "Thereafter, it is reported that the Austrasians bravely defended their frontier and the Frankish kingdom against the Wends",[68] further on he concludes that the agreement "in the event was faithfully observed in the time of king Sigebert and king Clovis".[69]

However, this devolution of power came too late to salvage Austrasian authority in the East. In Thuringia, *dux* Radulf rose in open revolt and – finding support among some of the Austrasian dukes and in Mainz[70] – delivered the Austrasians a crushing defeat on the Unstrut (639)[71] from which they would not recover for some generations. Details and consequences will be dealt with at a later time.

The conflicts beyond the Rhine are one expression of the specific

63 Apart from Fredegar's objections against the "Neustrian" Dagobert from c. 630 on, his Austrasian sympathy may be felt in sentences referring to Dagobert's alleged hatred (odium) of the Eastern Franks or to the Austrasian prowess (*Deinceps Austrasiae eorum studio limetem et regnum Francorum utiliter definsasse nuscuntur*; Fredegarius, IV, c. 68 and 75.

64 Fredegarius, IV, c. 74.

65 Ibidem; *... scaram de electis uiris fortis de Neuster et Burgundia ...*

66 Ibidem; *... consilio Neustrasiorum ...*

67 Fredegarius, IV, c. 75; *... Winidi iusso Samone forteter seuerint et sepius transcesso eorum limite regnum Francorum vastandum ...*

68 Ibidem; *Deinceps Austrasiae eorum studio limetem et regnum Francorum contra Winedus utiliter definsasse nuscuntur.*

69 Fredegarius, IV, c. 76; *Quod postea temporebus Sigyberti et Chlodouiae regis conseruatum fuisse constat.*

70 Fredegarius, IV, c. 87.

71 Ibidem.

territorial characteristics of Austrasia. From the accounts on the partitions of the *Regnum Francorum*, on the wars and conflicts in which Austrasia got involved and their territorial aspects, as well as on the uneasy relationship between the Austrasians and the territories and *gentes* beyond the Rhine, some conclusions may be drawn on the territorial awareness of the Austrasian élite. First, the constancy of the borders between East and West suggests that these borders corresponded to some deeply-embedded territorial divides which may have found their origin in late Vth-century "Salian-Ripuarian" arrangements. The tenaciousness with which the Austrasians, with regard to their Western border, clung to what they considered to be legitimate parts of their kingdom becomes clear in their dealings with Chlothar II on territorial matters. Also, the willingness with which they followed their kings in territorial wars (Theudebert II when he invaded Alsace in 610; Theuderic II when he prepared to take on the Neustrians over Dentelin, 613) suggests that the perspective of territorial gains could well inspire bellicose zeal. More complex was the territorial awareness of Austrasian aristocrats with regard to the territories beyond the Rhine. On the one hand, they profited from the opportunity which was provided them by territorial domination and expansion in the East and they appreciated kings who established and maintained strong authority there, as did Sigebert I, Chlothar II and the younger Dagobert I. On the other hand, they did not feel the same commitment to the territories beyond the Rhine as they felt toward the Austrasian heartlands on Meuse and Moselle. Paradoxically, they resented being left by the Neustrians and Burgundians to fight in the East without their support, as in 630 – whereas they greatly preferred to wage war in the East when led by a king "of their own".

When, from c. 630 onward, Merovingian authority beyond the Rhine began to wane, the attitude of Austrasian aristocrats toward kingship changed. On the one hand, they had less use for a king who could no longer provide them with the opportunity for lucrative warfare against the *gentes* in the East. On the other, having less use for a king of their own, they began to be more interested in influencing power in Neustria, manifestly so from 673 onward, when the Austrasian magnate Vulfoald, with "his" king Childeric II, acquired temporary power in the West at the expense of Ebroin. A few years later, other Austrasian magnates probably tried to set up Dagobert II as king of the whole Kingdom of the Franks (more extensively discussed in chapter four). On this development in the way the Austrasians dealt with kingship more will be said later on.

1.3. Approaches to Austrasian identity: Texts and Identities; ethnogenesis

This study is based on the analysis of mostly narrative sources which may, when properly interrogated, teach us things about Austrasian identity. Some of these are sources from the period between c 600 and c 800. Others are younger yet relevant because they report on the period concerned and provide a retrospective view.

In recent years, a promising approach to the relationship between texts and identities has developed. It has gained some fame under the straightforward designation "Texts and Identities". As applied in the work of Mayke de Jong and others, "this approach … combines two elements: on the one hand great stress has been laid on the careful analysis of transmission of texts and of the manuscript evidence; on the other, (the scholars involved) have concentrated on the problem of identity, or rather, of processes of identification, including perceptions of difference on the part of specific social, political and religious communities".[72] This approach is very relevant for dealing with the questions addressed in this study on the identity of Austrasians and Austrasia.

Thus, in this study the source material identified as relevant – it is presented in section three – has been analyzed according to the views and practices as they are being developed and applied within the paradigm of Texts and Identities. As a result, processes through which Austrasian identity develops as well as perceptions of this identity are primarily analyzed in this study from perspectives as they may be derived from or connected to the content and the transmission of the source material, in a methodologically valid way. Thus, the fact that practically all relevant narrative sources are either historiographical or hagiographic translates, in this study, into two corresponding "modules" which structure the discourse. Historiographical narratives mainly inform a module in which "kingship" is central; hagiographic narratives inform a module on "the sacred". Both modules, focussing as they do on political and religious communities, respectively, are highly identity-relevant. Ideologies and practices concerning kingship, as well as concepts and legends dealing with the sacred, are very eloquent on both the experienced and the assumed identity of the group, communities and sometimes individuals concerned. It will, in other words, turn out to be highly relevant to identify specifically Austrasian notions both on kingship as well as on the sacred, and to address questions on specific traits of kingship in Austrasia and on the specific way in which Austrasians related to the sacred.

72 R. Corradini et al. ed., *Texts and identities in the Early Middle Ages*. Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 12 (Vienna 2004), Introduction by Mayke de Jong, Rosamond McKitterick, Walter Pohl and Ian Wood, 11/12.

Yet a third module will be used in this study to help structure the discourse. This third module is also source-imposed, as are "kingship" and "the sacred", but instead of reflecting specific categories of narrative it is based rather on the inescapable fact that virtually all actors performing in the various narratives are aristocrats. This third module, therefore, concerns the aristocracy, the élite network (or networks) of persons who made a difference – literally so: here we have a "social community" (or communities) to which apply "perceptions of difference" in the sense of Texts and Identities.

Of course, the decision to approach the development of Austrasian identity from the structures as they are provided by the three modules kingship, the sacred and the aristocracy, as well as the decision to apply, where possible, the methods of Texts and Identities, do not as such provide an interpretational framework. At the same time, if we want to understand the genesis and development of an Austrasian identity, the dynamics connected to such an identity and its lasting influence on the very character of Carolingian rule, we need a framework that, if balanced and valorised, could have explanatory potential and value. For instance, the Carolingian preoccupation with authority, correctness and orthodoxy as it has been emphasized by McKitterick and others[73] could gain in conceptual strength if we should be able to connect it to specific characteristics of Austrasian identity. When we conceptually allow this Carolingian preoccupation with correctness to be interpreted in the context of the missionary ideology contained in (mainly) VIIIth-century hagiography, we may identify an idea of the sacred in which the dynamics of conversion are linked to the championship of orthodoxy.

There is another dimension to this. The changes occurring in the concepts and practices of Christian devotion in the VIIth and VIIIth centuries, specifically those concerning the missionary element, echo with Wenskus' and Wolfram's concepts on "change of religion" and (through mission) "primary enemy" (in this case translated as pagans to be converted) which are part of their ideas on ethnogenesis. In the final chapter of this study the applicability of the ethnogenesis paradigm for identifying "Austrasianness" will be studied – taking into account the fact that this "Austrasianness", rather than on ethnicity, was based on the development of a common mind-set for the elite network which, between c. 590 and

73 R. McKitterick, 'History and Memory in the Carolingian World' (Cambridge 2005); R. McKitterick, 'The formation of a European identity' (Cambridge 2008); I.H. Garipzanov, 'The symbolic language of authority in the Carolingian world (c. 751-877)' (Leiden 2008); M. de Jong, 'The Penitential State. Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840' (Cambridge 2009).

c. 800, was designated by the name "Austrasians".[74] This mind-set has relevance even to this day – not only because it permeated Carolingian history, but also because, in recent years, the interpretation of the period from 400-1000 has become crucial to political discourse across much of Europe.[75]

Section 2. Perspectives on kingship and on the missionary tradition in Austrasia

When studying the gradual development of Austrasianness during the VIIth and VIIIth centuries, through the perspectives of kingship, the sacred and the aristocracy, it is important to be aware of the fact that these perspectives are dynamic. Changes occur. Two of these changes of perspective have great bearing on the set-up and character of this study and will therefore be briefly presented here, prior to a further discussion in subsequent chapters. They are: changes in our ideas on Austrasian kingship, and a needed revision of our view on missionary work in Austrasia .

Before going into them, however, it is helpful to mention two recent approaches to Austrasia which may be considered generic to the whole concept of the area and its inhabitants. The first approach may be characterised as almost anthropological because of its application of network-analyses: I refer to the work of Theuws on the specific dynamics in Austrasia between peripheral groups and territories on the one hand and centralisation processes on the other.[76] The second approach represents, in a sense, a "Kulturraum"-approach: I refer to Halsall's recent proposition on what he calls the "Transformations of the year 600", specifically focussing on Austrasia.[77] Both approaches will be addressed in chapter five, with regard to the applicability of concepts of ethnogenesis in understanding the emergence of Austrasianness.

74 R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung. Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Vienna 1961) and H. Wolfram, *Das Reich und die Germanen. Zwischen Antike und Mittelalter* (Berlin 1990).

75 P.J. Geary, 'The crisis of European identity' [originally 2001] in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 33-42.

76 F.C.W.J., Theuws, 'Centre and periphery in northern Austrasia (6th-8th centuries). An archaeological perspective' in: J.C. Besteman, J.M. Bos and H.A. Heidinga ed., *Medieval archaeology in the Netherlands* (Assen and Maastricht 1990) 41-69.

77 G. Halsall, 'Relating changes in material culture to changes in ideas around 600', CMSA-lecture at University of Amsterdam, 12 September 2012. Also: G. Halsall, 'Social change around A.D.600. An Austrasian perspective' in: M. Carver ed., *The age of Sutton Hoo. The seventh century in North-Western Europe* (Woodbridge 1992) 265-278.

2.1. Austrasian kingship

Analyzing the effectiveness of Austrasian kings in the context of the three modules kingship, the sacred and the role of the aristocracy contributes to determining the position of the Austrasian "Teilreich" and the "Austrasianness" which emerged there.
Concerning the character of Austrasian kingship, it is generally assumed that the Austrasian reigns of the five kings who, in the VIIth century, ruled the kingdom as kings of Austrasia, were relatively irrelevant. Dagobert I and Childeric II are held to have become effective kings only when they also started to rule in the West. Sigebert III and Dagobert II, who never ruled anywhere but in Austrasia, are considered failed princes. Childeric II, who was murdered some years after he took over in Neustria, has no good press either. Yet in fact these kings were effective rulers of Austrasia. They cultivated a specific relationship with the sacred which strengthened their kingship and which, moreover, became instrumental in the development of Austrasian identity.
Much study has been and is still being devoted to early medieval kingship. In this field, J.M. Wallace-Hadrill,[78] H.H. Anton,[79] R. Schneider,[80] J.L. Nelson[81] and I.N. Wood[82] have provided the most thorough analyses. Much of the work done since the 1960's is still very relevant and has been instrumental in developing our understanding of early medieval kingship. However, as in this study the focus is on kingship in Austrasia, some questions have to be further pursued specifically for Austrasia. This should contribute to what I call an Austrasian "grammar of kingship".
In this context the element of electivity in Austrasian kingship must be addressed.[83] When trying to understand VIIth-century Austrasian kingship and its significance for Austrasian identity, it seems of particular importance to include electivity in the discussion. None of our sources report an Austrasian king having been elected *stricto sensu*, through a balloting process or something similar. Yet the awareness that electivity, as a principle, should play a formal role in designating a king is to be found in several key passages of Fredegar.[84] In Austrasia, the make-up of a king appears to have included very explicit allusions to at least a formal

78 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship.*
79 H.H. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit*. Bonner historische Forschungen 32 (Bonn 1968).
80 Schneider, *Königswahl und Königserhebung*.
81 Of J.L. Nelson's many contributions to the theme I mention here 'The Lord's anointed and the people's choice. Carolingian royal ritual' in: D. Cannadine and S. Price ed., *Rituals of royalty. Power and ceremonial in traditional societies* (Cambridge 1987) 137-180.
82 I.N. Wood, 'Kings, kingdoms and consent' in: P. Sawyer and I.N. Wood ed., *Early Medieval kingship* (Leeds 1977) 6-29.
83 Schneider, *Königswahl und Königserhebung*, op. cit., 64-186.
84 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40, 75 and 76.

element of electivity. Similar allusions are lacking in our information on Neustro-Burgundian kings. To some extent, Austrasian preoccupation with an electivity principle had its influence on the process leading to the Carolingian take-over in 751, as well as on the relations between subsequent kings and their aristocrats.
A second element important for the context of Austrasian kingship is Wallace-Hadrill's observation that kings in Western Europe, during the course of the VIIth century, appear to be "moving into an ecclesiastical atmosphere".[85] In Austrasia, this bears on the specific link between Austrasian kings and the sacred and forms an important contextual element for the narrative of Austrasian identity.

2.2. The missionary tradition of Austrasia

Regarding the missionary tradition of Austrasia it has long been assumed that already in the VIIth century Austrasia accommodated alleged missionary initiatives by men like Columbanus, Amandus and Bavo. Although the study will make clear that this assumption is false, this does not imply that there did not exist a strong connection between Austrasians and mission. Yet the character of this connection was complex – in that though having gained real significance through a process of hagiographic construction of missionary legend, its references to alleged VIIth- and VIIIth-century missionary activities were to a large extent imaginary instead of referring to actual VIIth- and VIIIth-century missionary journeys, which were to a large extent imaginary. All the same, the significance of missionary concepts for the genesis of an Austrasian identity was immense.
One element to be discussed in this respect is the degree in which Irish Christian ideas and practices influenced Austrasia. In this study, it will be shown that Irish concepts had a tangible influence on Christianity in Austrasia. Despite the fact that we must beware of overestimating the significance of Irish Christianity for the continental church, we may accept that in Austrasia the field of the sacred is "qualitatively" related to Ireland; at least more so than in Neustria. The exact character and the precise channels through which the relationship was effectuated must remain subject for another study. Here may suffice the observation that the Irish peregrine brothers Ultan and Foilan found a welcome in Pippinid territory at a time when their third brother, Furseus, was banished from Neustria.[86] We should not, however, conclude from this that Irish influence on Austrasian Christianity was decisive. Austrasian

85 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 47.
86 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover 1902) 449-451.

hagiography developed its own culture of legend construction which was, if anything, continentally oriented. Also, the hagiographers' ideas on mission – to be distinguished from missionary reality – had not much in common with the actual careers of Irish *peregrini*. Yet the conclusion is justified that we must take into account Irish influences as contextual elements needed to understand Austrasian identity.

Another element to be discussed in relationship to the missionary tradition of Austrasia and its link with Austrasianness is the construction of the legend of Amandus. A new approach to and interpretation of the various "Lives of Amandus"[87] reveals the importance of his legend for interpreting the relationship between kings and the sacred, an importance which is only enhanced by the fact that the legend is, deliberately and profoundly, misleading. In judging and weighing Amandus' legend, specifically concerning the account of the saint's relationship with Dagobert I and Sigebert III, some elements from the Chronicle of Fredegar can be used as a benchmark. The legend claims – in direct contradiction with the much more plausible account found in Fredegar[88] – that the saint baptised the child Sigebert III. It also reports on a miracle that allegedly occurred at the baptism, a miracle which reflects on the hagiographical status of both Amandus and Sigebert. An analysis of what lies behind the contradictions between Fredegar and the *Vitae Amandi*, as well as an analysis of the juxtaposition of Amandus' "first appearances" in the *Vita Columbani* and the *Vita Geretrudis* vis-à-vis the account from his own Lives, provides the main input for a new evaluation of the saint's significance. Standard assumptions concerning character and significance of Amandus' missionary work – and, consequently, some accepted viewpoints on missionary work on the borders of VIIth-century Austrasia – appear in need of revision. The manifest and recent work of many historians on Amandus provides input for such a review.[89] The review affects the interpretation of Austrasian "pre-Willibrord" saints, specifically with respect to missionary activities. It also affects our assessment of the ecclesiastical position of Austrasian kings and mayors. Hagiography made missionary activity into a contextual factor for, as well as a characteristic of Austrasian identity, even though attributing missionary ambitions to kings and princes who did not have them.

87 *Vita Amandi*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 395-485.

88 Fredegarius, IV, c. 61.

89 E.g. International Medieval Congress at Leeds, 2007: presentations by A. Helvétius, C. Mériaux, M. Diesenberger and Wood, *The missionary life. Saints and the evangelisation of Europe 400-1050* (Harlow 2001).

Section 3. The sources

This section presents the sources used for this study. These are all textual and they consist – as mentioned earlier – for the main part of narrative texts (both historiographical and hagiographic). This choice has been made because narrative texts, more than other texts and sources, say out about identity, explicitly as well as implicitly. This choice implies that non-narrative texts (legislation, charters, liturgy), as well as observations based on archeological finds, are used to set the context and corroborate the narrative findings rather than as primary sources.
The texts narrative are interrogated on identity-related topics, specifically on the development of concepts and practices regarding kingship, the sacred and the position of the aristocracy in Austrasia.
Most of the consulted texts date from the period between c. 600 and c. 800. They all are – with very few exceptions – of Frankish origin. Various younger texts have been consulted because of the light they throw, through (re-)interpretation, retrospect or otherwise, on Austrasian identity or on topics relevant to it. In addition, a limited amount of non-narrative texts was used, mostly letters and legal texts. In the following exposition, the text material has been arranged in more or less chronological order, according to the date of its creation (as far as feasible). For each of the texts dates are provided, as well as concise information on its origin and creation and a brief characterisation referring to relevance and possible problems related to this study.

3.1. Narrative sources of VIIth-century and/or Merovingian origin

Vita Columbani.[90] The earliest text used for this study is the *Vita Columbani*, which was written around 640-643 by Jonas of Bobbio (c. 600 – after 659); originally a monk of Bobbio, where he arrived shortly after Columbanus' death. Jonas worked with Amandus in the Scheldt area in the 630's. From 640 onward, following a renewed visit to Bobbio, he wrote the *Vita Columbani*.[91] For the purpose of this study, special attention is given, among the general richness of its material, to some perspectives which the *Vita* provides on kingship. These can be deduced from a number of episodes Jonas describes, more specifically from his colourful description of the conflict between the Burgundian

90 Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRG in usum scholarum 37 (Hanover and Leipzig 1905) 1-294.
91 *Vita Columbani*, prologue.

court and Columbanus. The author appears to state that only God can punish kings. Their subjects cannot and should not do so. In this respect, kings have an inviolate status. Jonas' (implicit) views on kingship are relevant for the study of Austrasia because of the general influence of his work, specifically the *Vita Columbani*, on contemporary Austrasians, in particular through the adoption, first in Fredegar and thus also in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, of his report on Columbanus' confrontation with the Burgundian court.

Other information relevant to this study is found in Jonas' introduction to the *Vita Columbani*, which is in the form of a letter to the abbots Waldebert of Luxeuil (629-670) and Bobbolenus of Bobbio († c. 640). The author, almost inadvertently, presents us with a brief glimpse of his evangelisation work with Amandus on the Scheldt, probably around the year 635. A closer analysis of this episode (taken together with some episodes from the *Vita Geretrudis*) induces a re-evaluation of the hitherto current views on Amandus. Also, the *Vita Columbani* offers some interesting information on Austrasia and its king in the years leading up to the crisis of 613.

Although the relevance of the *Vita Columbani* to this study mainly resides in some specific episodes, we should also realize that this *Vita*, despite the fact that it presents a highly selective account of Columbanus' career, is a major source for the development of monastic and spiritual life, primary for Burgundy, but to a much lesser degree certainly for Austrasia as well.

At least three *caveats* are in order when working with Jonas. First, he has a troubled relation with some of the beliefs, convictions and practices of his protagonist. Second, the Italian Jonas may not have had much real affinity with the Irishman Columbanus. Third, there appears to be a problem in the *Vita* concerning some references to missionary work.[92]

Chronicle of Fredegar.[93] That historians' historian, Fredegar, has much to contribute to an analysis of Austrasian identity.[94] Well aware of the long debate on the authorship of the Chronicle, this study's perspective on Fredegar is based on the "one author-view" as it was worked out by Goffart.[95] Fredegar knew well the *Vita Columbani* and adopted the episode of Columbanus' conflict with the Burgundian court almost (but not quite) verbatim. Recent research by Collins has thoroughly modified our view of Fredegar, e.g. by pointing out that the original VIIth-century

92 A helpful approach to the Life of Columbanus is offered by I.N. Wood, 'The Vita Columbani and Merovingian hagiography', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 63-80.

93 Fredegarius, IV. Fredegarius, *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici Libri IV. cum continuationibus*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 1-193.

94 Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar*, Introduction, VII – LXVII.

95 W.A. Goffart, 'The Fredegar problem reconsidered', *Speculum* 38 (1963) 206-241.

Fredegar set up his *Chronicum* in three books, whereas the more familiar four book-version as edited by Krusch in the MGH reflects, in fact is an VIIIth-century re-edition (see paragraph 3.2, below, on the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*). The last book of the Chronicle, the so-called "fourth book", was written, around 660, from a mainly Burgundian perspective.[96] Even so, it contains much explicit and implicit information on Austrasia and the Austrasians, specifically on kingship and aristocracy, which makes it a source of major relevance for this study.

Some of the more relevant topics from Fredegar for this study are the following.

Of great relevance is Fredegar's report of the events in 612/613 and the years of Chlothar's rule which followed. From the narrative it becomes obvious that there were acute tensions between the Austrasians and their new king. It is probable that the formal element of a king's "electivity", an element that was more important in Austrasia than in other Frankish lands,[97] played a role here.

A second topic is Fredegar's account of the baptism of Sigebert III,[98] which must be considered as factually correct and to be preferred to the miraculous version fabricated in the legend of Amandus.[99] This has consequences both for our views on Amandus as well as for our perspective on kingship in Austrasia. At the same time, conflicts between Fredegar's chronicle and hagiography cannot in all cases be decided unequivocally in the historian's favour. Wood has pointed to a conflict between Fredegar's account on the martyrdom of Desiderius of Vienne and the *Passio Sancti Desiderii*.[100]

A third topic on which Fredegar's account is revealing is his use of the terms "Austrasia" and "Austrasians". An analysis of this use contributes to our understanding of the character and attitude of Austrasian aristocrats and their relationship with the territory of Austrasia.

It is his apparent familiarity with Austrasian affairs which makes the one great omission in Fredegar's account all the more glaring: he has nothing whatsoever to say about the so-called "coup" of Grimoald, a major event which occurred during or immediately before the very years when Fredegar was writing the last book of his Chronicle. This is a fourth topic for analysis, providing, as it were, a *argumentum e silentio* which

96 R. Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken* (Hanover 2007).

97 The element of electivity is discussed in chapter 4, section 4, " Austrasian aristocrats and kingship".

98 Fredegarius, IV, c. 62, and Goffart, 'The Fredegar problem reconsidered'.

99 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 17; *Vita Amandi II*, I; on the reasons to prefer Fredegar's version to Amandus', see chapter three of this study.

100 *Vita Desiderii episcopi Viennensis*, B. Krush ed., MGH SSRM (Hanover 1896) 620-648; I.N. Wood, 'Forgery in Merovingian hagiography' in: *Fälschungen im Mittelalter V. Internazionaler Kongreß der Monumenta Germaniae Historica – München 16-19 Sept. 1986* (Hanover 1988) 369-384.

suggests conclusions on the character of the "coup" as well as on kingship in Austrasia.[101]

Vita Sanctae Geretrudis[102] & *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano*.[103] Another source from which to gather information on Austrasian identity is the *Vita Geretrudis*, together with its appendix, the *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano*. Both are of Austrasian provenance. The *Vita* was probably written by a monk of Nivelles in about 670. The *Additamentum* was actually an "addition" to the Life of Furseus rather than to the Life of Gertrud and was written already about 655, also by a monk from Nivelles. The arguments supporting this, as well as a concise overview of the manuscript situation of the *Vita*, are provided by Fouracre and Gerberding.[104] The *Vita* provides valuable background information on Austrasian affairs, among other things on Dagobert I's ways with Austrasian aristocrats and on the ruin of the Pippinid position after the alleged "coup" and subsequent fall of Grimoald. The *Additamentum* presents, "en marge" of its hagiographic content, mayor of the palace Grimoald and bishop Dido of Poitiers discussing matters of state at Nivelles Monastery in 651. Unfortunately, we are not told what the two men conferred about, but some educated guesses can be made.[105] In addition, some passages from the *Vita Geretrudis* shed light on the activities of Amandus around the year 640. It is relevant to compare this early information on the saint with the legend which afterwards was constructed around him. The outcome of this comparison is a further indication that a re-evaluation of Amandus' role is in order.

Visio Baronti.[106] A most peculiar work is the *Visio Baronti*, which reports the vision of the monk Barontus which he experienced in the course of a feverous illness. Barontus was a monk at the monastery of Saint Peter at Longoretus, near Bourges. His vision was written down by a monk of the monastery (Barontus himself?) briefly after the experience, about the year 680. In its visionary character, there is some affinity with the *Vita Fursei*,[107] which describes the life and, most of all, visions of the VIIth century Irish Saint Furseus. On the background of the *Visio* Hen has done

101 International Medieval Congress 2008, Leeds, presentation by I.N. Wood; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The long-haired kings and other studies in Frankish history* (London 1962) and Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 21-22.
102 *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 447-474.
103 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover 1902) 449-451.
104 Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 301-319.
105 R. A. Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum* (Oxford 1987), 59-61.
106 *Visio Baronti*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 368-394.
107 *Vita Fursei*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover and Leipzig 1902) 423-451.

important work, which this study makes grateful use of.[108] The relevance of the *Visio* for this study lies in its political message, which reflects views on the "coup" of Grimoald and, more generally, on kingship. Apart from this, of course, the *Visio* is also of great interest for what it says about the notions on monastic life, liturgy and devotion.

Passio Leudegarii episcopi Augustodunensis I.[109] This highly political hagiographic text was written at Autun, c. 680,[110] shortly following upon political upheavals involving, among other things, the murder of Childeric II (675). Because of this context and of the involvement of Austrasia in the events, the *Passio* is of value for analyzing the precarious relationship between Austrasia and Neustria/Burgundy at the time. Besides, Wood points out the significance of the *Passio Leudegarii* report on a possible legal reform in 673. A case may be made that this reform was connected with the development of distinct legislative traditions within Neustria, Burgundy and Austrasia.[111]

Vita Arnulfi.[112] Of special importance for understanding Austrasian affairs – political and otherwise – in the early VIIth century is the *Vita Arnulfi*, which may date from around or shortly after 700. Wood thinks it is possible to see the work as Merovingian – connecting it, as did Krusch,[113] with the *Vita Romarici* and the *Vita Amati*.[114] It is also plausible to see the *Vita* as Austrasian. It has a distinct Austrasian flavour: the author is familiar with Austrasian topography, he writes of a *nacio Secambrorum*, knows Arnulf's successor Goëric by name and mentions the Austrasian mayor of the palace Hugus.[115] One remarkable characteristic of this *Vita* of an alleged forefather of the Carolingians is the complete absence of any reference to this ancestry. More concrete, however, are the oblique references to political tensions at the Metz court during the rule of Chlothar II in Austrasia (613-629). These are consistent with the tensions which are suggested by Fredegar. This political dimension makes the *Vita Arnulfi* a highly informative source on some of the political elements of Austrasian identity – an appreciation that differs markedly from Wood's.[116]

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108 Y. Hen, 'The structure and aims of the Visio Baronti', *Journal of Theological Studies* 47 (1996) 477-497. Also: Y. Hen, lectures at Utrecht University, February/March 2007.

109 *Passio Leudegarii I*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover 1910) 282-322.

110 Fouracre, *Late Merovingian* France, 194-196.

111 *Passio Leudegarii,* c. 7 and Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 113-114.

112 *Vita Arnulfi*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 426-446.

113 *Vita Amati, Romarici, Adelphii abbatum Habendensium (introduction)*, B. Krusch ed., MGH SSRM 4 (Hannover 1902) 208-214, 210-212.

114 *Vita Arnulfi*, introduction Krusch 426; Wood, 'Forgery in Merovingian hagiography', 370-71.

115 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 16, 19, 23 and 14; knowledge of Austrasian topography: *passim*.

116 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 259-260: "... the *Vita Arnulfi*, which is a remarkably uninformative text ,...".

Vita Amati & *Vita Romarici*.[117] The last of the VII[th]-century sources are the Lives of Amatus and Romaric. They are the youngest sources mentioned so far. In fact they may date from shortly after 700. They are joined to a Life of Adelphius, which is possibly much younger but concerns us less.[118] It seems probable that all three Lives were written by a monk or monks from Remiremont.[119] Of these *Vitae Amati, Romarici, Adelphii* the Lives of Amatus and Romaric are of great relevance to the study. Both Lives contain concrete elements which are informative of the state of affairs in Austrasia. Among these are Romaric's meeting with Grimoald, and Amatus' introduction at Remiremont of the liturgical form of *laus perennis*. Both topics have relevance for interpreting the position of kingship in Austrasia. Intriguing is the report that Amatus was sent to work as a preacher in Austrasia.[120] Wood, pointing out that the word *subregulus* is used in both the *Vita Arnulfi* and the *Vita Romarici*, has drawn attention to the relationship – albeit a "problematical" one – between the two texts.[121]

3.2. Frankish narrative sources of the VIIIth and early IXth century

Vita Boniti episcopi Arverni.[122] Bonitus served at the court of Sigebert III and later became bishop of Clermont. He died c. 710. The *Vita Boniti*, which was written in the (early) VIIIth century, shortly after Bonitus' *translatio*, is – in the words of Wood – "an extraordinarily valuable text".[123] Its relevance for this study lies in insights it provides into – among other things – the Austrasian royal court at the time of Sigebert III, whose *nutritus* and *referendarius* Bonitus was.[124]

Liber Historiae Francorum.[125] The *Liber Historiae Francorum* is, together with Gregory's Histories and Fredegar's Chronicle, the main narrative source on Frankish history in the period from the VIth to the early VIIIth century. The work was written in Neustria, probably at Saint-Denis or

117 *Vita Amati*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover and Leipzig 1902) 215-221; *Vita Romarici*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover and Leipzig 1902) 221-225 and *Vita Adelphii*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover and Leipzig 1902) 225-228.
118 Wood, 'Forgery in Merovingian hagiography'.
119 *Vita Amati,* introduction Krusch, 211.
120 *Vita Amati*, c. 6.
121 Wood, 'Forgery in Merovingian hagiography', 370-71. *Vita Arnulfi* c. 3, *Vita Romarici* c. 6.
122 *Vita Boniti*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 6 (Hanover and Leipzig 1913) 110-139.
123 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 243.
124 *Vita Boniti*, c. 2.
125 *Liber Historiae Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 215-328.

Soissons, c. 727.[126] It is the only narrative source that reports the alleged "coup" of Grimoald – seventy years after the fact, undeniably. Despite its Neustrian origin and perspective, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* is informative on Austrasian affairs. Without its report, we would be hard put to properly position prominent Austrasians like Vulfoald, Pippin of Herstal and Martin. In fact, Martin, *dux* of Champagne, is mentioned in no other contemporary source.[127] Krusch, from his "positivist" perspective, had a low opinion on the *Liber Historiae Francorum*'s value as a historical source,[128] but the appreciation of its content has become much more positive, especially since Gerberding demonstrated how effective use of the text can generate a deeper insight in later VIIth-century and early VIIIth-century Frankish history.[129] In the context of this study, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* sheds light on – among other things – the Neustrian author's concept of kingship and his perception of the relationship between Austrasian aristocrats and kingship in the second half of the VIIth century.

Vita Landiberti Vetustissima[130] & *Vita Hugberti*.[131] Of less importance, but still eloquent on matters of kingship and devotion, are two smaller sources, both dating from the VIIIth century and both of hagiographic character. These are the *Vita Landiberti Vetustissima* and the *Vita Hugberti*. The Life of Lambert was written after 727 (or after 751), by an author who had not known Lambert personally.[132] The Life of Hubert dates from (shortly) after 743 and is the work of an author who had belonged to Hubert's companions.[133] The texts are relevant because of their general atmosphere and tone relating to kingship, devotion and aristocracy in the period between c. 650 – c. 750. Their "historic" narrative is of secondary importance, although not negligible. The Life of Lambert, moreover, sheds some light on the episcopal position in a complex secular environment.[134] Also, the Life of Hubert, although dependent of the *Vita Arnulfi*,[135] is informative on devotional characteristics of the later VIIIth century.

126 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 215; Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians* and Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 79-87.
127 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCXXXVII.
128 See Krusch in his introduction to the *LHF*, 217, concluding: "*Illa ... Historia Francorum auctoritatem fidemque minimam habet*".
129 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*.
130 *Vita Landiberti episcopi Traiectensis vetustissima*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 6 (Hanover and Leipzig 1913) 353-384.
131 *Vita Hugberti*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 6 (Hanover and Leipzig 1913) 471-496.
132 *Vita Landiberti*, introduction Krusch, 308.
133 *Vita Hugberti*, introduction Krusch, 474.
134 Cf the banishment of Lambert to Stavelot-Malmédy after the murder of Childeric II, *Vita Landiberti*, c. 5.
135 *Vita Hugberti*, introduction Krusch, 474.

Gesta Sancti Hrodberti Confessoris.[136] The *Gesta* as we know them were written probably in 793, but these in their turn appear to have been based on a lost "Life of Rupert" from c. 750.[137] The Austrasian aristocrat Rupert (c. 660 – 710),[138] who may have been bishop of Worms and probably belonged to a group of Austrasian aristocrats who waged opposition against Pippin,[139] has gained a place in hagiography as the founder of the Bavarian bishopric of Salzburg. The fact that Rupert, despite his alleged oppositional role in Austrasia, was later honourably welcomed in Bavaria may indicate the distance which had grown in the later VIIth century between Frankish kingship and the German areas. It is possible that Rupert, at the end of his life, returned from Salzburg to become an associate of the Merovingian king Chilperic II, who was set up by the Neustrians in opposition to Charles Martel.[140] In the context of this study, Rupert's career finds its specific meaning within the broader context of the relationship between Austrasian aristocrats and kingship as well as within the context of the construction of missionary legend.

Historia vel Gesta Francorum.[141] A late VIIIth-century source, the true character of which has only recently been identified by Collins, is the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*. This work, of which the final version was written in or about 787,[142] was commissioned and sponsored by an uncle of king Pippin I, count Childebrand, and by his son count Nibelung.[143] Superficially looked-at (as has been its long-time fate), the work consists of a four-book re-edition of Fredegar's three-book chronicle from the preceding century, a re-edition to which the VIIIth-century author has added *continuationes*. As Collins shows, however, this re-edition should rather be considered as a work – or at least as a concept – in its own right. This makes the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* into an VIIIth-century work – admittedly including almost all of the content which Fredegar composed in the VIIth-century –, which apparently was composed in

136 *Vita Hrodberti episcopi Salisburgensis*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM 6 (Hanover and Leipzig 1913) 140-162.

137 Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 146-150.

138 R. Deutinger, 'Rupert von Salzburg' in: 'Neue Deutsche Biographie' (NDB) (Berlin 2005) vol. 22.

139 *Vita Hrodberti*, 1-4; P.J. Geary, *Before France and Germany. The creation and transformation of the Merovingian world* (Oxford 1988), 210; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 162.

140 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 269.

141 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*.

142 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 92.

143 The basic text remains Krusch' Fredegarius edition, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1988), but of course the reconstruction of this text into the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* (hereafter *HGF*) is described by Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*.

praise of the new Carolingian dynasty.[144] In Collins' view the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* is not an Austrasian work and provides a mainly West-Burgundian or Aquitanian perspective.[145] However, the work's Austrasia-related content and contextual information justify a cautious reassessment of that judgment. The HGF provides us with relevant insight in mid- and late VIIIth-century aristocratic notions, e.g. on the grammar of kingship.

Vita Amandi I,[146] *Vita Amandi II auctore Milone*[147] & *Vita Amandi antiqua*.[148] Recently, much study has been made of the various *Vitae Amandi* that have come down to us.[149] The outcomes of this research, in combination with findings in this study on the construction of Amandus' legend in the VIIIth century, makes a re-evaluation of Amandus' role inevitable. This re-evaluation concerns, among other things, Amandus' relationship with the king(s) and his roles as a missionary and a bishop, and allows conclusions on Austrasian kingship and on its relation with the sacred. The VIIIth century provides us with three (versions of the) *Vitae* of Amandus. The earliest of them has only been identified as such in 1967. At that time, it was realised that the fourteenth-century *Speculum Sanctorale* of Bernard Gui[150] contained a complete *Vita* which was closer to a presumptive original than the MGH-versions.[151] In other words, since 1967 a *Vita Antiqua*[152] is known to chronologically precede the *Vita Prima*. The *Vita Amandi Prima,* which in a sense is (or was) the "classical" text on Amandus, must consequently be seen in another light. In addition, the *Vita Amandi auctore Milone* provides – among other things – "documentary evidence" on Amandus – which, however, is difficult to interpret. Dates of origin for the two older *Vitae* are not easy to conjecture. It seems plausible to surmize that the *Vita Antiqua* dates from between 755 and

144 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 82.
145 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 89-91.
146 *Vita Amandi I*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 428-449.
147 *Vita Amandi II. auctore Milone*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 450-483.
148 See: Wood, *The missionary life*, 39-42, including notes 130-132; text: *Sancti Amandi episcopi vita ab auctore anonymo*. J.-P. Migne ed., Patrologia Latina 87, cols 1267-1272.
149 E.g. International Medieval Congress at Leeds, 2007: presentations by A. Helvétius, C. Mériaux, M. Diesenberger; Wood, *The missionary life*. Basic: E. de Moreau, *Saint Amand. Le principal évangélisateur de la Belgique* (Brussels 1942).
150 *Sancti Amandi episcopi,* PL87,cols 1267-72.
151 Wood, *The missionary life*, 39-42; A.-M. Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima and its context. A status questionis', IMC paper presentation (510b) 2007.
152 J. Riedmann, 'Unbekannte frühkarolingische Handschriftfragmente in der Bibliothek des Tiroler Landesmuseums Ferdinandeum', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 84 (1967) 262-288.

768 and the *Vita Prima* from after 782.[153] The *Vita* written by Milo dates from c. 850.[154]

Annales Mettenses Priores.[155] For this study, the *Annales Mettenses Priores* form, together with the Chronicle of Fredegar, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* the *corpus* of historiographical narrative texts. The study concentrates on the first section of the *Annales*, which was probably written at Metz in c. 805.[156] This opening text provides us with the nearest thing to an "official" Carolingian interpretation of the late VIIth- and VIIIth-century past as it led up to the accession of Pippin the Short in 751. Although this interpretation is a highly biased one with wanton omissions and misrepresentations, it is as such highly useful to the purpose of this study. Suspect as they may be as historiography, the *Annales* are very helpful in providing us with a Carolingian view not only of the past, but also of the notions on kingship, authority and correctness as these were valid in the heyday of Charlemagne's reign. From an analysis of these one may pass to an assessment of historical continuity (actual or constructed) between the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. As the *Annales* were written, Austrasia proper had ceased to exist. At the same time Austrasian characteristics remained relevant for Carolingian ideology and practice.

Gesta Dagoberti I Regis Francorum.[157] The *Gesta Dagoberti I* were written between 800 and 835 at the monastery of Saint-Denis.[158] In a historiographical sense, as a source on the life of Dagobert I, the work has little value, although it does contain some interesting grains of (possible) truth not found elsewhere.[159] The main purpose for which it was written was the desire to clearly legitimize the prominent status of Saint-Denis Abbey. The interesting thing is that the *Gesta* do so by constructing a hagiographic legend around Dagobert's biography. This at least suggests that investing a king with holiness, even if long afterwards and artificial, was deemed an effective way of legitimizing his deeds and acts – and of annexing his memory to officially promulgated Carolingian history

153 On both datings, see: Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima'.

154 *Vita Amandi* (introduction Krusch) and C. Mériaux, 'A hagiographer at work. Milo of Elnone rewriting and completing the Life of Saint Amand, c. 850', IMC paper presentation (510c) 2007.

155 *Annales Mettenses Priores*, ed. B. de Simson MGH SS rer. Germ. (Hanover and Leipzig 1905).

156 Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 330-349.

157 *Gesta Dagoberti I regis Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 396-425.

158 *Gesta Dagoberti I*, introduction Krusch, 396-399.

159 Interesting are the episode on the war against the Saxon duke Bertoald (*Gesta Dagoberti I,* c. 14) and the report on Dagobert divorcing Gomatrude because she was infertile (*Gesta Dagoberti I*, c. 22).

(Dagobert being, of course, a Merovingian). In addition, the *Gesta* reflect an early IXth-century notion on the development of royally sponsored liturgy in the days of Dagobert I.[160]

Vita Remacli.[161] The *Vita Remacli* was written by a monk of Stavelot-Malmédy, in the IXth century, some two hundred years after the life of its protagonist.[162] The relevance of the work for this study lies in its notions and views on the significance of the man who founded Stavelot-Malmédy during the reign of Sigebert III and became its monastic bishop. In that respect, the Life says out about the concepts related to a VIIth-century royal Austrasian monastic foundation and how these were perceived to work on in later times. Remaclus, a former monk of Luxeuil and abbot of Solignac, came to Austrasia at a crucial time in its political and ecclesiastical history. His significance at that particular time and place lies in, among other things, concepts of ecclesiastical organisation and ideology which he and his foundation reflect, concepts which are closely connected with those of Irish monasticism and of Luxeuil.[163]

3.3. Other narrative sources

Vita Wilfridi.[164] The *Vita Wilfridi* was written between 711 and 731 by Stephen of Ripon.[165] The work is informative on VIIth-century Frankish and Austrasian history in its description of Wilfrid's interaction with Dagobert II and with (the followers of) Ebroin.[166] Analysis of this account allows conclusions on the position of kingship in Austrasia, on the relations between the Austrasian aristocracy and its king and on the conflict between Neustria and Austrasia in the late seventies of the VIIth century.

Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum.[167] This great history was completed by Bede in 731. Bede has things to say about kingship and sanctity. Specifically his account on (the deaths of) the three Northumbrian kings

160 Y. Hen, *The royal patronage of liturgy in Frankish Gaul to the death of Charles the Bald* (London 2001) 36-37.
161 *Vita Remacli I*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 88-108.
162 The date is proposed by Krusch in his introduction, 94-95.
163 F. Baix, 'Saint Remacle et les abbayes de Solignac et de Stavelot-Malmédy', *Revue Bénédictine* 61 (1951) 167-200.
164 *Vita Wilfridi*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM 6 (Hanover and Leipzig 1913) 140-162.
165 For author and date see introduction by Levison, *Vita Wilfridi*, 179-181.
166 Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi*, ed. B. Colgrave, *The life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge 1927) c. 25, 27, 28 and 33.
167 Introduced, edited and translated *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people*, ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1992).

Edwin, Oswald and Oswin[168] is informative on how Anglo-Saxon kings might achieve sainthood – "a distinction denied to the Merovingians", as Wallace-Hadrill comments.[169] This study will look into the question whether or not the accounts on these kings influenced (later) Austrasian or Carolingian concepts on kingship and the sacred. After all, the Northumbrian kings involved were full contemporaries of Dagobert I and Sigebert III and operated in a sphere of culture which had close links with Francia and, in a very specific way, with Austrasia – witness the overseas relations of Nivelles[170] or Amandus' involvement with *pueros transmarinos*.[171]

Gesta Dagoberti III Regis Francorum.[172] These *Gesta* were written between 1069 and the early XIIth century.[173] Its prime importance for this study lies in the retrospective claims concerning sainthood for Dagobert II (*sic*). What light – if any – do such late claims shed on the relation between kingship and the sacred? Clearly its author produced a highly unreliable work, mixing up as he did the biographies of Dagobert II and Dagobert III.[174]

Vita Sancti Sigeberti Regis Austrasiae.[175] This Life of Sigebert III was written – or rather: constructed – towards the end of the XIth century by the monk Sigebert of Gembloux. Sigebert probably wrote the Life during his years at the Metz monastery of Saint-Vincent ca. 1065. At the time, it was claimed that this monastery had been founded by king Sigebert III.[176] This late *Vita* provides us with the only complete hagiographic account of Saint Sigebert. Despite the *Vita*'s late origin and retrospective view, it may be interrogated on concepts regarding Austrasian kings and the sacred.

168 Beda Venerabilis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford 1896) II, c. 17 (Edwin; see also Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 81-82), III, . 6 (Oswald) and c. 14 (Oswin).
169 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 83.
170 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 3 and 5.
171 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 9.
172 *Vita Dagoberti III regis Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 509-524.
173 *Vita Dagoberti III*, introduction Krusch, 509-511.
174 Ibidem.
175 Sigebert of Gembloux, *Vita Sigeberti III regis Austrasiae*, ed. M. Bouquet, 'Vita Sancti Sigeberti regis Austrasiae', *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France* 2 (Paris 1869) 597-602.
176 According to the *Vita Sancti Sigeberti*, V, c. 17, Sigebert III was buried at Saint Martin / Saint Vincent, at Metz. His *dies* is 1 February.

3.4. Other sources

Epistolae Austrasicae.[177] A remarkable source are the *Epistolae Austrasicae*, a collection of letters put together shortly after 590 at the Austrasian court of Childebert II or his successor. The collection was probably meant as a collection of model letters.[178] The character of the compilation suggests a trainee practice for *notarii* at the Austrasian court. Many of the letters are taken from royal or diplomatic correspondence and are informative on the grammar of kingship. Also, the letters inform us on how Austrasian kings saw themselves and their territory, which is of specific interest in identifying elements of ethnogenesis in Austrasia.

Edictum Chlotharii[179] & *Concilium Parisiense*.[180] Both texts represent the outcomes of the great meetings (a gathering of the great, back-to-back with a church council) held by Chlothar II at Paris in 614, after his take-over of Austrasia and Burgundy. Specifically the famous passage of Chlothar II's Paris Edict on "judges from other provinces and regions" needs to be reassessed.[181] The accepted view – represented most eminently by Ewig[182] – holds that the distinct traditions suggested by the text had little real significance and should rather be seen as an artefact resulting from textual transmission and its interpretation. They would, in this view, certainly not reflect an overall regionalisation within Francia. The text of the Edict can, however, also be interpreted in terms of distinct traditions of culture and identity, which developed in the context – and contributed to the genesis – of a distinct kingdom of Austrasia within the *Regnum Francorum*.

Lex Ribuaria.[183] This study follows Wood's hypothesis on the origin of *Lex Ribuaria*, where he writes that it "is possible ... to find a context for the issuing of *Lex Ribuaria* in the aftermath of Chlothar's take-over of Austrasia in 613, when he was concerned to secure support in the new territories, or ten years later when he set up an eastern sub-kingdom for his son Dagobert I".[184] The relevance of *Lex Ribuaria*, therefore, for this study of Austrasian identity, lies in the fact that it played a role – or was

177 *Epistolae Austrasicae*, ed. W. Gundlach, MGH Epistolae Epp. 3 (Berlin 1892) 110-153.
178 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 26.
179 *Chlotharii II. Edictum*, ed. A. Boretius, *Capitularia regum Francorum*, MGH LL Capitularia regum Francorum 1 (Hanover 1883) 20-23.
180 *Concilium Parisiense a. 614*, ed. F. Maassen, MGH LL Concilia 1 (Hanover 1883) 185-192.
181 *Chlotharii II. Edictum*, clause 12.
182 Ewig, 'Die fränkischen Teilreiche', 173.
183 *Lex Ribuaria*, ed. F. Beyerle en R. Buchner, MGH Leges LL nat. germ. 3.2 (Hanover 1964); see also Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 110.
184 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 116. References are to Fredegarius, IV, 43 and 47. Wood adds: "Equally, Dagobert himself may have been responsible for the *Lex Ribuaria*".

intended to play a role – in the "reconstruction" of the kingdom in the period following Chlothar's take-over.[185]

Episcopus quidam iuvenem regem ... proponens.[186] At some time in the late 640's, an unknown Frankish bishop wrote a letter to a youthful king who stood at the beginning of his reign.[187] Contextual information within the letter indicates that the bishop wrote to either Clovis II of Neustria or Sigebert III of Austrasia, with the latter the more likely recipient.[188] The letter is informative of what a mid VIIth-century bishop thought fit to tell a young king in Austrasia about his duties. The letter presents us with a first systematic view and ideology of kingship in Francia.

Marculfi monachi Formulae.[189] An additional source on kingship is the Formulary of Marculf, the *Marculfi monachi Formulae*. This collection of "formats" for letters and charters was supposedly compiled by the monk Marculf. Marculf is hard to localize in time or in place, yet the year 700 probably was the point around which the collection crystallised.[190] The relevant parts of the Formulary are the *arengae* of the formats for royal charters which, when taken together, read like a concise "mirror of princes" (Wallace Hadrill[191]). The analysis of Marculf's "models" will provide some contemporary benchmarks for judging VIIth-century Merovingian kings.

185 According to Mordek 1994 it is probable that the Thuringian duke Heden the Elder (after 643 – after 676?) contributed to the promulgation of *Lex Ribuaria*, H. Mordek, 'Die Hedenen als politische Kraft im austrasischen Frankenreich' in: J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter ed., *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen 1994) 345-366. If true, this would make a role for Chlothar II († 629) less plausible, but it would in no way be incompatible with the Lex belonging in a context "in the aftermath of Chlothar's take-over". Wood points out that Lex Ribuaria is "the most ostentatiously Christian of al the pre-Carolingian law codes" (Wood, *The missionary life*, 10).

186 *Epistolae aevi Merowingici collectae*, ed. W. Gundlach, MGH Epistolae Epp. III (Berlin 1892) 434-468, 457-460.

187 Ibidem.

188 My main reason to consider Sigebert III as the adressee is the letter's allusion to *gentes adversantes*, which appears to refer to opposition from beyond the Rhine (p. 458, line 26).

189 Marculfi, *Formulae*, ed. K. Zeumer, MGH Leges Formulae Merowingici et Karolini aevi 1 (Hanover 1886) 32-112.

190 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 104.

191 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 49.

II. The grammar of kingship and the Austrasians, 600-800

Section 1. Ideology – general

In the VIth and VIIth century ideological concepts on kingship came into full expression in Western Europe. There was a rich context for this development. The Ostrogoth king Theuderic the Great (493 – 526) became the first Germanic king whose position could be clearly defined in its relationship to the Roman emperor. He had been made a *patricius* and became consul. At the same time, his Germanic kingship was to a large degree defined by Christian standards.[1] King Sigismund of Burgundy (516 – 524) consciously and explicitly defined himself and his kingdom in Christian-Byzantine terms and, in the end being martyred, achieved holiness.[2] The development of Christian kingship among the Visigoths was greatly helped by the efforts of Isidore of Seville (c. 560 – 636; see below).[3] Thus, in thinking about kingship the development of Christian and late-Roman concepts became more and more manifest in the course of the VIth century.

The ideology of kingship has been extensively studied, particularly in the period since the 1950's. In 1954 Ewig concluded that already in VIth-century Francia the king's power was associated with biblical examples like David and Solomon.[4] Anton pointed out in 1968 that towards the middle of the VIth century a Merovingian king in Austrasia was addressed in an episcopal letter as if he were a bishop himself (*sacratissime presul*).[5] Wallace-Hadrill in 1971 stated that in the VIIth

1 On Theuderic the Great, see: Wolfram, *Das Reich*, chapter IX.

2 On Sigismund as a Christian / holy king, see: R. 'Folz, Tradition hagiographique et culte de Saint Dagobert, roi des Francs', *Le Moyen Âge. Livre jubilaire* (1963) 17-35, 24-27.

3 On Isidore of Séville and kingship see: E. Ewig, 'Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter' in: E. Ewig ed., *Das Königtum, seine geistigen und rechtlichen Grundlagen. Mainauvorträge 1954* (Lindau 1956), 30-36.

4 E. Ewig, 'Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter' 7-73, 21-24. For specific Merovingian symbolism see R. Buchner, 'Das merowingische Königtum' in: E. Ewig ed., *Das Königtum, seine geistigen und rechtlichen Grundlagen. Mainauvorträge 1954* (Lindau 1956) 143-154.

5 Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit*, 50.

century kingship entered into an ecclesiastical atmosphere.[6] Schneider, looking at kingship from a more Germanic perspective, in 1972 saw Merovingian kingship in the VIth and VIIth centuries as increasingly defined in terms of consent and (formal) electivity.[7] Nelson in 1977 presented early medieval kingship as becoming more and more liturgified.[8]

The focus on kingship has, if anything, increased in recent years. Wood has recently drawn attention to the importance of royal legislation in early medieval Europe; he specifically pointed out the Merovingians' zeal in this respect.[9] Legislative activity provided a way out for kings who, with the gradual ending of the turmoil of the migration age, saw their sphere of activity shrink. "Peace was the problem for kings".[10] The growing emphasis on royal ideology in the VIth and VIIth centuries reflects kings and their courts attempting to solve this problem.

All in all, the substantial academic effort spent on early medieval kingship has brought us much. We have become more aware of the link between ideology and (Merovingian) political expediency (Ewig), of the strong connection between the ecclesiastical and the royal *ministerium* (Ewig, Anton, Wallace-Hadrill), of the complex character of the relationship between the king and his followers (Schneider), of the growing legislative role of monarchs (Wood) and of the psychological dimensions of medieval kingship and its context (Nelson). An additional perspective, which scholars often addressed implicitly but which has recently gained more explicit relevance, is provided by the study of the mutual influence of kingship and identity as this is addressed within the framework of "Texts and Identities".[11] This approach points the direction to the development of a "grammar of kingship" for the period between 600 and 800, along lines comparable with the work of Walter Pohl on a "grammar of identity".[12]

This study intends to contribute to a grammar of both kingship and

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6 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 47.

7 Schneider, *Königswahl und Königserhebung*, 140 and 143. On electivity see also P. Grierson, 'Election and inheritance in early Germanic kingship', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 7 (1941) 1-22.

8 J.L. Nelson, 'Inauguration rituals' in: P. Sawyer and I.N. Wood ed., *Early medieval kingship* (Leeds 1977) 50-71, 54. See also G. Dumézil, *The destiny of a king* (Chicago 1971).

9 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 102-119.

10 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 12. On the relationship between kingship and warfare see also M. McCormick, *Eternal victory. Triumphal rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the early medieval West* (Cambridge 1986).

11 Much work on the links between kings and kingship on the one hand and identity on the other has been presented at the Leeds University's "International Medieval Congress", specifically in the sessions where, from 2000 onward, work of the working group "Texts and Identities" was presented. See: Corradini, *Texts and identities in the Early Middle Ages*.

12 Information on the Wittgenstein Project 2005-2010: http://www.oeaw.ac.at/gema/Wittgenstein/home.html

identity – through analyzing Austrasian identity while focusing on kingship – as well as provide some new perspectives on their links with the sacred and with the aristocracy.
In this chapter the development of the grammar of kingship will be discussed.

Ministerium Dei; numinosity of kings
At some time in the late 640's, an unknown Frankish bishop wrote a letter to a youthful king who stood at the beginning of his reign.[13] The bishop admonished the young king to adopt David and Solomon as his models – but also to follow the example of his grandfather Chlothar II, who according to the bishop acted "almost as a priest", because he not only ruled the Franks but also built churches. As long as you act in this spirit, the bishop wrote, your people will pray for you with the words of the Psalmist: "O Lord, save our King".[14] There is a liturgical sound to this. The bishop was rather precise on the young king's duties. As David and Solomon had respected the prophets, so the young king should respect the priests (*sacerdotes*, bishops) and his senior counselors.[15] Special respect was in order for the mayor of the palace.[16] The bishop reminds the king of a well-known common saying: "He who consults with others sins not alone".[17]
According to Dümmler, who edited the letter, the bishop addressed either young Clovis II, king of Neustria (...) or young Sigebert III, king of Austrasia (...).[18] Judging from the letter's allusion to *gentes adversantes*, which – *gentes* often alluding to heathen peoples[19] – probably refers to peoples beyond the Rhine, Sigebert III is the most probable addressee.[20] If he was, the letter informs us of what a mid-VIIth-century bishop thought fit to tell a young king in Austrasia about his duties. In any case, the letter presents us with a first systematic ideology of kingship in Francia. And when the bishop admonishes the young king that he should conceive of his royal office as a *ministerium Dei*,[21] he clearly echoes Isidore of Seville.

13 *Epistolae aevi Merowingici collectae* , 457-460.
14 Ibidem, 459, line 30; *Domine, salvum fac hunc regem nostrum* (A reference to Psalm 19, 10 – *Vulgata*, *Psalmi iuxta LXX*. The *nostrum* is lacking in the Psalm and may be an addition by the letter's author).
15 Ibidem, 457, line 26 – p. 458, line 20.
16 Ibidem, 458, line 3-4; *... qui post te palatium tuum regit*. This could be litterally interpreted as: "he who governs the palace after you have left there" – which could mean "mayor of the palace".
17 Ibidem, 458; *Qui cum pluribus conciliatur, solus non peccat*.
18 Ibidem, 457; Both kings were grandsons of Chlothar II, who in the letter is indicated as the addressee's grandfather.
19 Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, *gens*, significance 8.
20 *Epistolae aevi Merowingici collectae*, 458, line 26.
21 Ibidem, 460, lines 18-19. *Ministrum te Dei esse scias ad hoc constitutum ab ipso ...*

Isidore, working within the context of Visigothic Spain, quite concisely defines in his *Sententiae* the relationship between king and church: God would hold the king responsible for how he (the king) would use his power to the church's benefit.[22] Furthermore, in his *Etymologiae* Isidore makes clear that worldly law is by no means the monopoly of the king, but rather issues from the great in conjunction with the people.[23] In fact, Isidore presents his readers with a doctrine on kingship, which seems sober and workable. In the words of Ewig "he objectivizes a king's "rule" to a king's "office".[24] Isidore thus defines the concept of a king's *ministerium Dei*, a concept which we also find in the conclusions of the fourth Council of Toledo (633), which Isidore presided over. According to Ewig, Isidore was the first to use the concept of the *ministerium Dei* in this way.[25] As we saw, only a few years later the anonymous Frankish bishop writing to his young king applied the concept to Frankish kingship.

The "ideological" conceptualization of early medieval kingship had other roots, too. Abbots and bishops in Ireland had contributed to the ideology, through deeds and acts as well as through words.[26] Saint Columba the Elder created a precedent when he confirmed Aidan king of Scotland by imposing his hands on Aidan's head and blessing him (574).[27] It is an explicit reminder of Samuel and, as such, a further step towards the sacral, Christian interpretation of kingship. In addition, the Irish treaty *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* (c. 630 – c. 700; often referred to as Pseudo-Cyprian) credits kings with numinous properties: a king's good governance would bring, among other things, fair weather and good harvests, whereas bad governance would bring the reverse. A *rex iniquus* would bring about *adversitates*.[28] In this view, a king epitomizes certain supernatural forces – by no means all of Christian origin. Similar numinous perspectives are sometimes reflected in concepts on VIIth-century Austrasian kingship.[29]

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22 *Sententiae III*, 51, 6: *Ille* (=*Deus*) *ab eis* (=*regibus*) *rationem exiget, qui eorum potestati suam Ecclesiam credidit.*

23 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. W.M. Lindsay, *Etymologiae* (Oxford 1911). Consulted on LacusCurtius, II, 10; *Lex est constitutio populi, quam maiores natu cum plebibus sancierunt. Nam quod Rex ... edicit, constitutio vel edictum vocatur.*

24 Ewig, 'Zum christlichen Königsgedanken', 33: "Die historische Leistung Isidors ... liegt in der Objektivierung der Königsherrschaft zum Königsamt".

25 Ewig, 'Zum christlichen Königsgedanken', 34.

26 T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge 2000) 136-144.

27 Ewig, 'Zum christlichen Königsgedanken', 37. "Irland (bot eine) labile Umgebung (da), Äbte und Bischöfe (galten) wie Profeten ...", as well as "Columba der Ältere († 597) erhob Aidan (von Schottland) durch Handauflegung und Segen zum König".

28 *Duodecim abusiuis saeculis,* ed. S. Hellmann*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 34 (Leipzig 1909).*

29 Ewig, 'Zum christlichen Königsgedanken', 37-41; Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit*, 66-70 and Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 55-59.

Section 2. Ideology – narratives

This section deals with the way in which narratives central to this study deal with the ideology of kingship. The narratives are: a) the *Vita Columbani*; b) Fredegar's Chronicle; c) the *Liber Historiae Francorum*; d) the *Annales Mettenses Priores*. They are discussed in the order given here, that is: chronologically according to the time of their composition.

The grammar of kingship in the Vita Columbani[30]

The VIIth-century paradigm of Christian kingship – a compound of elements like Isidore's *ministerium Dei* and the Frankish bishop's admonition to his young king to "rule like a priest" – is only indirectly reflected in one of the major narrative sources for (early) VIIth-century Francia, Jonas of Bobbio's *Vita Columbani*. Although Jonas, writing c. 640-643, has many things to say about kings, he does so in rather a casual way, without explicitly referring to ideology. Implicitly, however, his account of the life of Columbanus contains strong opinions on kingship. In Jonas' view, there are two kinds of kings. The first type is the *rex inclytus*, the "illustrious king".[31] Such a king displays *humilitas*, listens to spiritual admonitions and follows them up, and lives chaste.[32] A good king is a king who could consider to give up his crown and become a monk.[33] In Jonas' eyes, Chlothar II was a good king, "*sollers in amore sapientiae*".[34] We must be aware of possible overtones here. We are dealing with the *Vita* of an Irish saint, for whom a *sapiens* was a holy man.[35]

The second type of king, as opposed to the "illustrious king", offers a more complicated phenomenon. A central episode in the *Vita Columbani* concerns the conflict between Columbanus on the one hand and the Burgundian king Theuderic II and his grandmother Brunhild on the other. Jonas' account shows Theuderic with many of the characteristics of a bad king. Yet Jonas does not outright name Theuderic a bad king. His tone is flat and rather circumspect, characterizing the king and his grandmother Brunhild not by adjectives but by the verbs chosen to describe their actions: "*insaniebant*, *adversabantur*" – "they raged", "they opposed" – and the like.[36] This prudence is also shown in a passage on

30 *Vita Columbani*, Jonas of Bobbio, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRG in usum scholarum 37 (Hanover and Leipzig 1905) 1-294.

31 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 6.

32 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 18.

33 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 28.

34 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 24.

35 On *Sapiens*, see: P. Brown, *The rise of western Christendom. Triumph and diversity, A.D. 200-1000* (2nd edition; Malden 2003), chapter 10, 232-247. Also: Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 264-271.

36 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 27.

Columbanus' attitude during the war of 612/13. While the saint's opponent Theuderic II of Burgundy was locked in battle with Theudebert II of Austrasia, Columbanus is quoted as saying that it would be improper for him to pray for Theuderic's defeat, even though he – Columbanus – had suffered greatly through that king. Instead, it was God who should judge between the two rivals.[37]

Jonas' narrative tone suggests that there is something about a king which places him above man's judgment – even if he is a bad king. When, in the end, Theuderic is punished it it is God, not man, who does the punishing: "*divinitus percussus ... mortuus est*".[38] Kings may commit adultery, refuse to marry decently or break promises, as Theuderic II did.[39] Yet they remain kings: the monks whom Columbanus left behind after being expulsed from Luxeuil remain within the "*preceptis regis*".[40] For Jonas even bad kings retain their "kingliness". Like Old Testament prophets, Columbanus did not mince his words with the king, but he never expressed doubt on the legitimate kingship of his royal adversary. Jonas' account on the early VIIth-century Merovingian kings suggests that the grammar of kingship at the time came to include notions of the inviolate nature of kings and, conversely, of the king's need to come to terms with the sacred. These notions remained valid. When, in the first half of the VIIIth century, the Carolingian mayors began to feel the need to justify their authority, it was not enough for them to point to the ineffectiveness of the last Merovingians. These remained inviolate, being kings – and thus the Carolingians would have to provide themselves with a spiritual authority with which to balance this inviolability.

Jonas puts some prophecies on the fortunes of kings into Columbanus' mouth. One such prophecy – reproduced also by Fredegar, who otherwise disregards the miracles reported by Jonas[41] – deserves specific mention. It concerns the saint's announcement of Theuderic's fall from power; this is the occasion where his words remind one of the Pseudo-Cyprian's utterances on the *rex iniquus*: both Pseudo-Cyprian and the text of Jonas link a king's iniquity to the possible ruin of the whole commonwealth.[42] Jonas' account on this point has an authentic ring to it. After all, Columbanus was an Irishman and the tonality of a Pseudo-Cyprian may have been part of his own make-up.

37 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 28.
38 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 29.
39 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 18 and 19.
40 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 20.
41 Fredegarius, IV, c. 36.
42 *Vita Columbani,* I, c. 19: *... cito tuum regnum funditus ruiturum et cum omni propagine regia dimersurum. De duodecim abusivis saeculi,* 9th *abusio: ... pax populorum rumpitur ... terrarum quoque fructus diminuuntur ... varii dolores prosperitatem regni inficiunt ...*

The grammar of kingship in the Chronicle of Fredegar[43]

The way in which our second major source for the period, Fredegar,[44] deals with kings and kingship differs substantially from Jonas' approach – despite the fact that he quotes Jonas extensively on the conflict between Columbanus and Theuderic II. Fredegar is much more explicit on royal virtues and vices. Kings are, with mayors of the palace and queens, Fredegar's protagonists. One king in particular occupies him: Dagobert I. In Fredegar's view, Dagobert started out as a model king in Austrasia – only to forget himself badly when he also became king of Neustria and Burgundy. Fredegar, as opposed to Jonas, is lavish in his use of qualifications and adjectives to characterize kings. And he, writing during the years up to c. 660, appears to fit well in the ecclesiastical paradigm of kingship as it was developing at the time. Of Guntram, Fredegar says that he, "when he was with his bishops, he conducted himself like one of them".[45] Of Chlothar II, that he was "a God-fearing man, for he was a munificent patron of churches and priests, an almsgiver to the poor, kindly disposed to all and full of piety".[46] Jonas says no such things of kings. Now Fredegar, other than Jonas, may well have been a layman,[47] a point in case being the fact that he omits all miracles from the extensive episode he borrows from Jonas.[48] What would have induced him, lay or cleric, to use such explicitly ecclesiastical terms when evaluating kings? An analysis of how Fredegar writes about kings may help our understanding. Take, for instance, his dealing with Theuderic II's mistresses. When he reports the births of the king's four sons, Fredegar at each occasion emphatically mentions the concubine status of their

43 Fredegarius, *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici Libri IV. cum continuationibus*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 1-193.

44 I follow the views of Goffart and Erikson on the authorship of the chronicle. There appears to be no ground to attribute the work to more than one author. Goffart, 'The Fredegar problem reconsidered' and A. Erikson, 'The problem of authorship in the chronicle of Fredegar', *Eranos* 63 (1965) 46-76.

45 Fredegarius, IV, c. 1. *Gunthramnus rex Francorum ... cum, sacerdotibus utique ad instar se ostendebat ...*

46 Fredegarius, IV, c. 42. *Iste Chlotharius fuit timens Deum, ecclesiarum et sacerdotum magnus muneratur, pauperibus aelimosinam tribuens, benignum se omnibus et pietatem plenum ostendens ...*

47 The probability that Fredegar was a layman is most plausibly proposed by Wallace-Hadrill in *The long-haired kings and other studies in Frankish history* (London 1962) chapter IV, 71-94. See especialy 75, note 1.

48 Fredegarius, IV, c. 36.

respective mothers,[49] as if rejecting the king's loose morals.[50] In choosing these words, Fredegar disqualifies the mothers and the children – and, in adopting Jonas' views and words –the king himself. Fredegar sets standards of decency for his kings and this colors his account of them. A major objection of him against Dagobert I is in the same vein: "He surrendered himself to limitless debauchery ... the names of his mistresses it would be wearisome to insert in this chronicle; there were too many of them. And so his heart was corrupted ... and his thoughts turned away from God".[51] From these and similar passages it is clear that Dagobert failed to live up to Fredegar's standard. Fredegar nowhere explicitly presents this standard. We may, however, learn about his ideas on this by summing up the passages where his indignation comes through.
Yet Fredegar seems to think that Dagobert had started out well – when, as a youth, his father Chlothar II had set him up as king of the Austrasians.[52] As long as Dagobert had ruled only Austrasia and had listened to the advice of Arnulf and Pippin, he had been the wise king who inspired awe to all, even as far as the Avar frontier.[53] Austrasia occupies a special place in Fredegar's thinking on kingship. Fredegar is knowledgeable about Austrasia and the Austrasians and he tells much about them in his chronicle.[54] Not only he feels that Dagobert I was a better king when his rule was still confined to the Austrasians, we will see below that he also thinks that the Austrasians were better off when they had a king of their own. This had to do with what he felt was decent and good government and what constituted good counselors to the king. Once again, Fredegar goes further than just referring to accepted wisdom (like Isidore's) on good governance. No one in the Chronicle gets such lavish praise from Fredegar as the Austrasian magnate Pippin. Pippin is "of all men the most careful, a true counsellor, a man of unshakable fidelity and beloved of all for that passion of justice that he had prudently instilled in Dagobert in the days when the king used to listen to him. He did not become

49 Fredegarius, IV, c. 21 (... *de concubina filius nascitur* ...), c. 24 (... *de concubina nascitur ei filius* ...[2x]), c. 29 (...*natus est de concupina Teuderici filius* ...). This is a much more explicit treatment of "birth out of wedlock" than we find with Jonas, where the fact of the illegitimate birth of Theuderic IV's sons, though central to the king's conflict with Columbanus, becomes only apparent through the Saint's reproaches – in a secondary form, narratively speaking.

50 More may be at stake. By the time Fredegar wrote, power in Austrasia and Burgundy had long since devolved to the descendants of Chlothar II. It could thus be expedient to deny the legitimacy of the sons (dead though they were) of Theuderic II.

51 Fredegarius, IV, c. 60. ... *luxoriam super modum deditus ... Nomina concubinarum, eo quod plures fuissent, increuit huius chronice inseri. Quod cum uersum fuisset cor eius ... et ad Deum eius cogitatio recessisset ...*

52 Fredegarius, IV, c. 47.

53 Fredegarius, IV, c. 58.

54 In the Fourth Book of Fredegar (apart from the *Continuationes*) Austrasia is dealt with in almost a third of all the chapters).

forgetful of what was just nor did he leave the paths of righteousness but in Dagobert's presence behaved in every way reasonably and always showed how prudent he was".[55] Fredegar presents an ideal here – and it has an Austrasian flavor to it. When reporting the birth of Dagobert's eldest son Sigebert, he specifically mentions the fact that the child had been begotten during a formal tour of the king through Austrasia, on an Austrasian young woman, Ragnetrude.[56] She is named a *puella*; which has a connotation different from *concubina*.[57] Also Fredegar reports that the infant was entrusted to Pippin prior to being baptized at Orleans.[58] Fredegar seeks decency in a king – decency comprizing such varied elements as chastity (which should, however, not impede a king from producing an heir), associating with the right counselors and following their advice. Fredegar's standards for a king include a religious dimension, witness his explicit assessment on the piety of Guntram and of Chlothar II (see above). Dagobert I failed conspicuously on this religious dimension – after his beginning years in Austrasia, that is. "Had (his) earlier wise almsgiving not foundered, he would indeed in the end have merited the eternal kingdom *(... regnum ... meruisset aeternum)*", Fredegar writes.[59] Also, he reports how the pious Breton king Judicael refused to sit down at dinner with Dagobert, preferring instead the company of the referendary Dado (=Audoin).[60]

Thus we find, in a writer who is interested in Austrasians and Austrasia (and who may have laic outlook), a concept of kingship involving decency, respect for council and explicit ecclesiastical virtues. It was also in Austrasia that Fredegar found his prime example of good governance, namely the early reign of Dagobert I, when he took his council from Pippin. Moreover, Fredegar provides us with the positive examples of two Austrasian women associated with Austrasian kings: Theudebert II's wife Bilichild[61] and Dagobert I's *puella* Ragnetrudis.[62] Their brief records

55 Fredegarius, IV, c. 61; *...Peppinus, cum esset cautior cunctis et consiliosus ualde, plenissemus fide, ab omnibus delictus pro iustitiae amorem, quam Dagoberti consiliose instruxerat dum suo usus fuerat consilio, sibi tamen nec quicquam oblitus iustitiam neque recedens a uiam bonitates, cum ad Dagoberto accederit, prudenter agebat in cunctis et cautum se in omnibus ostendebat.*

56 Fredegarius, IV, c. 59.

57 On *puella* see Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (he has no explicit lemma on *concubina*). In this instance, Fredegar may consciously have left the notion vague.

58 Fredegarius, IV, c. 61-62.

59 Fredegarius, IV, c. 60. *... utinam illi ad mercedem ueram lucre fuisset, nam aelymosinam pauperobus super modum largiter aerogabat, si huius rei sagacitas cupiditates instincto non prepedisset, regnum creditur meruisset aeternum.*

60 Fredegarius, IV, c. 78; Judicael's refusal to sit down at dinner with Dagobert suggests that the king may have been excommunicated at the time.

61 Fredegarius, IV, c. 33.

62 In Fredegar's narrative, Bilichild and Ragnetrudis markedly contrast with Brunhild – who was, of course, driven from Austrasia and later met a miserable end.

within the narrative once more suggest that, in Fredegar's perspective (and narrative), the Austrasian context is conducive to decent kingship. A decent king is a king who can take advice, who respects religious and ecclesiastical interest and who is chaste.
Fredegar's episodes on kings in Neustria (or in Lombardy or Spain, for that matter) are – at best – much more neutral in this respect. Concerning kings in his "own" Burgundy, he depicts Guntram as rather an exemplary king, for the rest confining himself to repeating Jonas' views on the licentiousness of Theuderic II and the depravity of Brunhild. An exception is his report on the martyr's death of Desiderius of Vienne. "Theuderic followed the wicked advice of Bishop Aridius of Lyons and of his grandmother Brunechildis and ordered him (Desiderius) stoned to death ... this evil deed cost Theuderic and his sons their kingdom".[63] The account demonstrates once more Fredegar's conviction that a king should possess Christian virtues.

The grammar of kingship in the Liber Historiae Francorum[64]
The author of the third narrative to be considered, the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, finished his narrative about 727, three quarters of a century after Fredegar wrote. The author, who looks back to the work of Gregory of Tours rather than to Fredegar, was probably a monk from Soissons.[65] His outlook is markedly more ecclesiastical than Fredegar's. He is attentive to kings and queens founding or sponsoring churches[66] and indignant when he describes king Clovis II appropriating an arm of Saint Denis.[67] He emphatically spotlights a number of holy men and women: queen Clothild, bishop Medardus of Soissons, bishop Germanus, bishop Audoinus of Rouen[68] – whose deaths he invariably describes with the words "*migravit ad Dominum*", an expression customary in saints' Lives and which our author deliberately inserts also when he is recycling older texts, mainly Gregory of Tours.
Other than holy men and women, who "migrate to Christ", kings and queens and other dignitaries in the *Liber* just "die" (*obiit*, *mortuus est*), with one exception (see below). Also, the author of the *Liber* often – but not always – uses markedly down-to-earth, non-ecclesiastical terms

63 Fredegar, IV, c. 32. ... *Teudericus consilio Aridio episcopo Lugduninse perfedum utens et per suasum auae suae Brunechilde, sanctum Desiderium ... lapidare precipit. ... pro hoc malum gestum regnum Theuderici et filiis suis fuisse distructum.*
64 *Liber Historiae Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 215-328.
65 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, introduction.
66 *LHF*, c. 19 (*...basilica sancti Petri apostoli, quam* [*Chlodoveus*] *vel regina sua aedificaverant.*), *LHF*, c. 34 (*Multa munera ac dona Chilpericus rex ecclesiis vel pauperibus ... est largitus*) and *LHF*, c. 42 ([*Dagobertus erat*]*ecclesiarum largitor. Ipse enim elimosinarum copia de fisco palacii per ecclesias ... primus distribuere censum iussit.*)
67 *LHF*, c. 44.
68 *LHF*, c. 27, 29, 33 and 47.

when characterizing kings. Adjectives like *utilis*, *strenuus*, *efficax* and *fortissimus* abound. Also Balthild is called *strenua* and there is no allusion whatsoever to her eventual sainthood.[69] These adjectives are also used to characterize non-royal leaders like Waratto and Charles Martel.[70] Yet there is a development in the narrative in this respect. Three kings attract the author's positive attention. Chlothar II is described as a *rex magnus,*[71] a king who, accordingly, left behind a magnificent impression on the battlefield: "... standing there, wearing his armour, helmet on his head, his long graying hair in curled locks;"[72] here we have charisma, but no piety as yet. Dagobert I is *fortissimus* and even *severissimus,*[73] but in addition he is named "*ecclesiarum largitor* and *pacificus velut Salomon.*[74] Here the terminology is moving into an ecclesiastical atmosphere, to paraphrase Wallace-Hadrill.[75] Most conspicuous is the author's veneration of king Childebert III († 711), whom he knew and possibly served personally and whom he introduces as a *vir inclytus.*[76] When mentioning Childebert's death, the author for once honors a king with the choice of words he normally reserves for (prospective) saints: "*... bonae memoriae gloriosus domnus Childebertus rex iustus migravit ad Dominum*".[77] It is as if the author's perspective on kings, expressed by words like *utilis* and *strenuus* when he deals with kings from more remote times, mellows towards an emphasis on *pacificus* and *iustus* when he reports on kings closer to or contemporaneous with his own times and experience.

The *Liber Historiae Francorum* has nothing specific to say about kingship in an Austrasian context. But the work nevertheless contributed to the development of a specific Austrasian grammar of kingship, through its influence on the author of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, the work from the second half of the VIIIth century which contains the so-called *Continuationes* to Fredegar.

The *Liber* contributes to the grammar of kingship an element of royal responsibility, whether or not with a religious tinge. A king should be just, he should be a peacemaker. He must support the church. When he does so, his end will be blessed like that of a saint. Also, the author is quite outspoken on what a king should not do or be. He should not profane

69 *LHF*, c. 5, 19, 37, 38 and 42.
70 *LHF*, c. 47 and 49.
71 *LHF*, c. 35.
72 *LHF*, 41 (my translation); *... stans, lurica indutus, galea in capite, crines cum canicie variatas obvolutas ...*
73 *LHF*, c. 42.
74 *LHF*, c. 42
75 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 47.
76 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*,, 49.
77 *LHF*, c. 50.

relics, or pestilence may result.[78] He should not oppress the Franks, or his murder may result.[79] And kings should avoid *bellum civile* – or face divine intervention.[80]
The *Liber Historiae Francorum* was written at a time in which the Franks came increasingly under dominance of an Austrasian elite. The author seems to accept this – without, however, showing any enthusiasm. Pippin is a *princeps*, but no further appreciation, positive or negative, is offered. Charles Martel is a *vir elegans, egregius atque utilis,*[81] words which reflect respect rather than affection. Affection the author saves for his patron, the late Childebert III. The *Liber* does not provide Charles Martel or Pippin the Short with the justification to do away with the Merovingians. But it does contain a selection of instruments and attributes which might be – and eventually were – put to use in constructing a new Carolingian legitimacy.

The grammar of kingship in the Annales Mettenses Priores.[82]
Some eighty years after the *Liber* was completed at Soissons, the first section of the *Annales Mettenses Priores* was written. For this study we will concentrate on this first section. Its author probably was a monk who wrote at Saint Arnulf's monastery at Metz, towards the year 805.[83] In their perspective on kingship, the *Annales* present us with the views current in mature Carolingian times. Several elements stand out. First, there is a certain uneasiness regarding the deposition of the Merovingians,[84] an uneasiness which is compensated for by an obsession with legitimacy of the Carolingians. This obsession is reflected by, among other things, a strong emphasis on the ties between the papacy and the consecutive Carolingian kings.[85] Also, the author stresses the biblical models for

78 *LHF*, c. 44. ... *Chlodoveus brachium beati Dionisii martyris abscidit, instigante diabulo. Per id tempus concidit regnum Francorum casibus pestiferis.*
79 *LHF*, c. 45. ... *Childericus levis nimis, omnia nimis incauto peragebat ... Francos valde oppremens...(Bodilo) super eum ... surrexit ... interficit (regem) una cum regina pregnante ...*
80 *LHF*, c. 25. (... *Chrodichildis regina ... beati Martini sepuchrum abiit, ibique in oratione ... vigilans, deprecans, ne inter filios suos bellum civile consurgeret*. Also: *Cumque convenissent cum hostibus magnis contra Chlotharium ... orta est maxima tempestas ...*), 37 (*In ipsa pugna* [a *bellum civile* between Theuderic II and Chlotharius II] *fuit angelus Domini gladio evaginato super ipso populo.*)
81 *LHF*, 49.
82 *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. B. von Simson, MGH SRG in usum scholarum 10 (Hanover and Leipzig 1905) (hereafter *AMP*).
83 Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 332 and 339.
84 Witness the numerous instances where the author emphasizes the care of the Carolingian mayors to uphold the Merovingians' royal status: *AMP*, 12, lines 13-18, 14 lines 6-9, 15 line 17, 17 line 3, 18 lines 12-16, 25 lines 28-30. It is to be noted that the *AMP* makes no mention of Clovis IV, the puppet Merovingian Charles Martel set up in 717, at a time when Charles had no control yet of Chilperic II.
85 *AMP*, 30-31, 42 and 45.

and Christian duties of the Carolingian leaders both before and after they obtain the kingship.[86] And there is the importance attached to the Carolingians' role as defenders of their people's (religious) welfare, as"correctors" of their people.[87]

Of interest in this context is the *Annales*' dealing with Arnulf of Metz. The bishop is introduced as a close relative on Pippin of Herstal's father's side, "a certain man full of powers" who was "the founding basis of his (=Pippin's) rule".[88] In the later tradition, notably through Paul the Deacon, Arnulf was depicted as the father of Ansegisel, which would have made him the grandfather of Pippin and the most illustrious and holy ancestor of the Carolingians.[89] In fact, there is no proof for this assertion and it is significant that the *Annales* only name Arnulf "a close relative to Pippin's father".[90] Yet even this is not confirmed by other sources.[91] However, it is significant that the *Annales* nonetheless attempt to connect Arnulf to the Carolingians. It reflects the Carolingians' need for Christian legitimacy. In the end, therefore, this was adopted as part of the grammar of Carolingian kingship.

Conversely, there is the *Annales*' stashing away of Grimoald. The author asserts that Pippin of Herstal had received and inherited his grandfather Pippin of Landen's name and leadership "because offspring of the masculine sex was lacking to him" (=Pippin of Landen).[92] Yet Pippin of Landen did of course have a son, Grimoald. The reasons why Grimoald was expurgated from this official Carolingian history[93] may have been twofold: his coup against the Merovingian dynasty did not fit with the official view that the mayors had always respected royal legitimacy. Possibly more important was the fact that he had been shamefully put to death by king Clovis II.[94]

Both the "annexation" of Saint Arnulf and the obliterating of Grimoald are expressive of the conscious effort of the *Annales*' constructing a

86 *AMP*, 1, Pippin II is compared to David; 12, *cunctam ... patriam in Christi servitio florentem ... reddidit*; 13-14, on the synod and Pippin's care for widows and orphans.

87 *AMP*, 4, *... factus est illis ... defensor et iustissimus in corrigendis moribus dominator*; 20, *desperante de salute populis robustissimus defensor ...*

88 Translation Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 352. *AMP*, 3, lines 17-20: *Ad solidandum quoque ipsius imperii fundamentum erat ei* (=Pippin) *agnatione propinquus quidam vir plenus virtutibus, Arnulfus nomine, Metensis urbis episcopus.*

89 Paulus Diaconus, *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium*, ed. G.H. Pertz, MGH SS 2 (Hanover 1829) 260-268, 264 lines 35/36: *... qui* [= *Karolus*] *de eiusdem beati Arnulfi descendens prosapia, ei in generationis linea trinepos extabat.*

90 *AMP*, 3.

91 Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 352, note 114, calls the evidence for Arnulf as an actual ancestor " very thin". In my opinion there is no proof whatsoever.

92 Translation Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 351. *AMP*, 2, lines 17-18: *Sane quia huic masculini sexus proles defuerat ...*

93 Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 40-49.

94 *LHF*, c. 43.

correct grammar of kingship. Annexing Arnulf adds Christian legitimacy to Carolingian kingship. Erasing Grimoald from the picture prevents kingship from being stained by illegitimate action and shameful failure. The *Annales* have yet other things to say on kingship. While repeatedly emphasizing the Carolingian mayors' respect for Merovingian kingship, the author time and again criticizes actual motifs and deeds of the later Merovingians. When Theuderic III appears filled with *superbia*, as in his dealings with Pippin II, he will suffer because of it.[95] Merovingian kings tended to choose bad counselors who instill *superbia*, men like Ebroin[96] or Berchtar.[97] On the other hand, good rulers will consult their followers on important issues. In the *Annales*, Pippin II, Charles Martel and Pippin III are doing it all the time.[98]

The *Annales* are a very Austrasian work. It is written from an Austrasian perspective. Arnulf of Metz is a role-model. The Franci Orientales or *Osterliudi* are the people whom the author considers his fellows.[99] The inhabitants of Neustria – here presented as *Niwistria* – are different; they live in "that kingdom",[100] a semi-foreign region which Pippin, for rightful reasons, had to invade in his 687 campaign. The author makes extensive use of the writings of the continuator to Fredegar – or to be correct: of the *Historia vel gesta Francorum*, a work with a strong Austrasian and aristocratic slant composed some twenty years before the *Annales*. Because the content of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* is, to a large extent, identical to Fredegar, this text is not separately discussed here. Its distinctive significance has more relevance to chapter four, on Austrasian aristocrats. It will be discussed in that context. Thus, the *Annales*, which represent an official Carolingian view of Frankish history – although the precise reason why they were written just at that time and in this way may not yet be determined[101] –, were composed by an author who based his Austrasian perspective on a work – the *Historia vel Gesta* – which was written to provide an ideological context to the rise of the Carolingians.[102]

The first section of the *Annales Mettenses Priores* constitutes the most explicit expression we possess of the Austrasian grammar of kingship as it had developed by the beginning of the IXth century. Legitimacy of authority constitutes a major element of this grammar – a legitimacy

95 *AMP*, 7, line 8 – 12, line 18.

96 *AMP*, 5. See P. Fouracre, 'Merovingians, mayors of the palace and the notion of a "low-born Ebroin", *Bullettin of the Institute of Historical Research* 57 (1984) 1-14 (A).

97 *AMP*, 6, line 22 – 7, line 14.

98 *AMP*, 7, *Pippinus adunatis optimatibus suis rem in medium retulit*; 14, *cum omnibus Francis secundum priscorum consuetudinem concilium tenuit*; 31, *... congregatis optimatibus*.

99 *AMP*, 4.

100 *AMP*, 8; *... Niwistriam ...*; 9; *... ad interiores regni illius partes ... perveniunt ...* NB the even worse 'istius' is not applied.

101 Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 40-49.

102 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 82 ff.

which appears based primarily on consensus between the ruler and his magnates, *i.e.* his Austrasians, the *Osterliudi*. Such consensus is, of course, identity-driven as well as identity-shaping. Judging from the perspective of the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, *Osterliudi* develop a large part of their identity through the discourse with their king. Within this discourse, correctness becomes a key notion,[103] which is exemplarily expressed in relation to the sacred. Arnulf of Metz is an iconic figure in this respect.

Relations between the narratives

So far in this chapter, four narratives were examined on their perspective on kings and kingship: Jonas' *Vita Columbani*, the Fourth book of the Chronicle of Fredegar, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and the *Annales Mettenses Priores* (first section). It is important to remain aware of their mutual relationship.

Jonas' text comes first, chronologically. He was an Italian, who lived for a long time in Neustria and Burgundy; his *Vita Columbani* dealt with the life of an Irish *peregrinus*. There is nothing Austrasian about Jonas or his work. Yet his contemporary Fredegar, whose work comes second in chronological order, quoted extensively and almost *verbatim* Jonas' crucial text about the conflict between Columbanus and the Burgundian court. In doing so, he brought Jonas' views on kingship within the Austrasian sphere.[104] Fredegar wrote much about Austrasia and his audience included many Austrasians. By way of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, in which texts of Fredegar and of the Neustrian *Liber Historiae Francorum* provided most of the input, ideas on kingship found their way into the *Annales Mettenses Priores*.

The texts reflect a development in thinking about kingship. This development is not the result of conceptual "progress" consciously worked at by subsequent authors. Rather, it reflects an evolution in kingship and in its context, a context which includes the sacred and the role of the aristocracy. Also, we see how the conceptual development through the various texts coincides with a strengthening of the Austrasian orientation of each one. We should beware of teleological reasoning here. The development in the texts was not causal to the conceptual development, nor did their increasing Austrasian orientation bring about a specific Austrasian way of thinking about kings and kingship. Rather, the texts – as said before – reflect an evolution in kingship while they found, at the same time, an interested audience in Austrasia.

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103 R. McKitterick, 'Royal patronage of culture in the Frankish kingdoms under the Carolingians. Motives and consequences' in: *Committenti e produzione artistico-letteraria nell'alto medioevo occidentale*. Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 39 (Spoleto 1992) 93-129.

104 On the dissemination of the *Vita Columbani* in Merovingian Gaul see A. O'Hara, 'The Vita Columbani in Merovingian Gaul', *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009) 126-153.

What we see, then, in these texts is that the conceptualization starts with a notion of kingship – and king – being inviolate. Only God may call a king to account. This remains true even if a king disregards or abuses a saint. There lies a seeming paradox here, because there is also a significant element of electivity involved with kingship, particularly in Austrasia – as will be discussed in chapter four, where the role of the Austrasian aristocracy is dealt with. The inviolate status of kings, which in the *Vita Columbani* appears like a matter of course rather than the outcome of conscious conceptualization, lives on in the Chronicle of Fredegar. Not even Dagobert at his worst is denied his royal status by Fredegar. At the same time, he allows himself to be very critical of the king's actual functioning. In the course of his reporting on Dagobert and other kings, almost as an inevitable function of his narrative, he also develops criteria for good kingship: the king should choose good counselors and heed their advice. A king should show decency, both in dealing with his counselors as well as in his personal behavior. Kings had better be God-fearing, too, because otherwise they may miss out on eternal bliss. Dagobert (during his Austrasian years) and his counselor Pippin provide Fredegar with his ultimate example on good governance. It must have made a good read for Austrasians in the troubled years after the fall of Grimoald (657), whom Fredegar wisely left out of his narrative.
The Neustrian *Liber Historiae Francorum* assigns its own virtues to kings. Writing in the early 720's, the author asks from kings that they be responsible, just, and peace-loving. This implies, among other things, that they should honor the church, abstain from sacrilege, should not suppress the *Franci* and should avoid *bellum civile*. Also, the author alludes to "his" king Childebert III in terms reminiscent of sanctity; this is a point to return to – as is the fact that the *Liber* is neutral in its view of the Austrasians who had come to boss it in Neustria. In the "Austrasian" *Annales Metttenses Priores*, which underwent various influences (Fredegar, the *Liber Historiae Francorum*) through the intermediary of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, the development seems to have achieved a new level, which combines conceptual ripeness with existential unease on kingship. Royal governance should be based on consensus between the ruler and his magnates. This is the more important because of the Carolingian obsession with legitimacy (It is into this tension between consensus and legitimacy that the element of electivity reenters). The *Annales* mobilize Bible, Papacy and the venerable memory of Arnulf of Metz to strengthen this legitimacy. Prudence characterizes the *Annales*' dealing with Merovingian kings, although some criticism – e.g. on *superbia* – is allowed. Grimoald and his infringement on (Merovingian) legitimacy are suppressed. Everything considered, the *Annales* have a rather forced feeling to them. We should realize, of course, that when they were being written, towards 805, the *Admonitio Generalis* had been

in existence for some fifteen years. This reflects in the *Annales*' emphasis on devoutness and the king's role as a corrector and makes them a quintessential work to "get the feel of" Carolingian kingship and Empire. The position of kings and the concepts concerning kingship are related to a polity's identity. This is the case in Austrasia. The above analysis of narrative texts makes clear that in the VIth and VIIth centuries an increasing conceptualization on kings and kingship met with increasing interest of an Austrasian audience.

Section 3. Ideology – applied

The four narratives dealt with in the previous section reflect the development of a grammar on kingship. The use of this grammar was not restricted to historiography. It was also applied in concrete royal action or in action related to kingship.
The late VIIth-century Formulary of Marculf – a Neustrian work – sets a format for such action, a format in which the ideology of kingship is reflected.[105] The model charters which the Formulary present contain terms like *clementia principale*[106] and depict kings as acting *in Dei nomen* (*sic*).[107] The king is he to whom "*Dominus regendi curam committit*", whom "the Lord entrusted with the care of governing".[108] From the Formulary we may deduce a certain distinction between a king's *ministrare* – that is: fulfilling his responsibilities as prominent member of the church – and his *gubernare*: governing his secular realm. In the divine order, *ministrare* is the more prominent of the two, and it brings with it the responsibility to invest new bishops, of which Ewig states: "Als höchste Funktion des Königs gilt die Verleihung des Bischofsamtes".[109] Marculf's formulary evokes a kingship which would derive the legitimacy of its administrative actions from its position within the divine order. It contributes to the grammar of kingship – *e.g.* with concern to legitimacy in general.

105 See on Marculf: A. Uddholm, *Formulae Marculfi. Etudes sur la langue et le style* (Uppsala 1953); On administrative practice: I.N. Wood, 'Administration, law and culture in Merovingian Gaul' in: R. McKitterick, ed., *The uses of literacy in early medieval Europe* (Cambridge 1990) 53-69; U. Nonn, 'Formel, -sammlungen, -bücher, III Frühmittelalter' in: R.H. Bautier ed., *Lexikon des Mittelalters* IV (Munich 2003) 648-649.
106 Marculfi, *Formulae*, I, 2, 4, 33.
107 Marculfi, *Formulae*, I, 11.
108 Marculfi, *Formulae*, I, 26.
109 Ewig, 'Zum christlichen Königsgedanken', 23.

The grammar of charters – suggestive but problematical

The grammar of – legitimate – kingship becomes quite specific in actual diplomatic practice. Of course, Merovingian royal charters have a grammar of their own, containing terms like *in Dei* / *Christi nomine rex* or in *Dei nomen* / *nomine*. Some charters, though, actually might reflect more incidental, contemporary dynamics of kingship. However the results of a survey of these charters appear to be highly problematical, since the most recent edition[110] has qualified a vast amount of these charters as false. Problematical though this might seem, this need not make these charters useless for research as such. One needs to check for every charter whether the textual elements referring to kingship might be the results of an interpolation or a fabrication. Charters might have been fabricated using bits and pieces from other charters, including charters from the Merovingian period, making these textual elements genuine Merovingian ones. A close analysis of all these charters yields a disappointing answer however: each and every single mention of kingship, which goes beyond the aforementioned standard formulae is or might be the result of an interpolation or a fabrication.

A charter from 667, genuine though with interpolations, of Childeric II – a boy at the time –, names the king's mother (Sigebert's widow) Chimnechild and his wife Bilichild "queens by the grace of God"; unfortunately this *intitulatio* is one of the interpolations.[111] Two other charters are outright fabrications. These are ascribed to Childeric II and Dagobert II, but actually are XIIIth-century fabrications.[112]

The Epistolae Austrasicae

A more convincing example of applied ideology is provided by royal correspondence. Some twenty royal letters from Austrasia, most of them from Childebert II (575-596) have been preserved in the collection (of forty-three letters in all) known as the *Epistolae Austrasicae*.[113] The first thing noticeable about this collection is the very fact of its existence. Obviously, in late VIth-century Austrasia, a tradition of royal correspondence had developed – in all probability carried by a group of royal *notarii* – which possessed enough vitality to provide for something like a record office as well as for mechanisms to pass on the acquired administrative practice.[114]

A second element to be noted concerning the *Epistolae* concerns its ambiguous character. Most of Childebert's letters are addressed to

110 Kölzer, Th. ed. 'Die Urkunden der Merowinger' (Hannover 2001), two vols.

111 MGH DD MER 1, 108; ed. Th. Kölzer: *gratia Dei reginae*; the version we have stems from a XIIIth-century cartulary.

112 MGH DD MER 1, 112, 117; ed. Th. Kölzer.

113 *Epistolae Austrasicae*.

114 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 26: "The compilation ... might be seen as a collection of model letters, appropriate to all sorts of circumstances, formal and informal".

Constantinople – either to the emperor Maurice or to influential persons around him. On the one hand, they display a sense of veneration and even awe for Maurice, which may also have been conditioned by the subject matter: in most letters, Childebert is the requesting party, pleading for the release of his nephew Athanagild.[115] On the other hand, the language of some of the letters clearly aims at conveying a sense of equality between the two commonwealths, through expressions such as "... in order that peace be consolidated between both peoples (*gentes*) ... and profit be achieved for all".[116] From the context of the letters it is clear that with the two *gentes* mentioned the Byzantine Empire and Austrasia are meant. It is certainly remarkable that the king calls both the Austrasians and the Byzantines a *gens*, thus interpreting their mutual diplomatic relations in terms of "Franks" and "Greeks" rather than "Franks" and "Empire". Obviously Childebert, in his relations with Constantinople, thought it expedient to show a certain amount of conceit. We see a self-conscious Childebert II staking out his own *vis à vis* the major power of the day. In addition, we learn from the diplomatic letters that the Austrasian court adopted a practical approach, addressing some of the letters not to Maurice himself but to his entourage. This shows Childebert applying diplomatic pressure by creating and involving a network of courtiers and clergymen, which was not unusual in those days. This also reflects an Austrasian court capable of undertaking a sustained diplomatic effort. The *Epistolae Austrasicae*, in their random and coincidental way, allow us a glimpse of the grammar of Austrasian kingship in an international context. It is true that, despite the at times forward an frank tone of the letters, it is still *Childebertus rex* addressing *Domino ... semper Augusto ... Mauricio Imperatore* (letter 25), a formula which clearly implies a difference in rank. On the other hand, we also have a letter addressed by the emperor to *Childebert, vir gloriosus, rex Francorum*.[117] There obviously were some dynamics between the two powers.

Legislation

Another example of applied royal ideology is provided by royal legislation.

115 Athanagild was the son of Brunhild's late daughter Ingund and the Visigothic prince Hermenegild. He was being held at the Byzantine court. According to Gregory of Tours (*DLH*, 6.40, Hermenegild's father had imprisoned him for rebellion and left his wife and his son to be captured by the Greeks. Paul the Deacon (*History of the Lombards*, 3.21) explains that Hermenegild had been converted from Arianism to Catholicism by his wife and a bishop. His Arian father king Leuvigild put him to death. Ingund fled and was captured by the Greeks. She was brought to Sicily (or Carthage) where she died. Her child was brought to the emperor Maurice.

116 *Epistolae Austrasicae*, 32, *… ut inter utramque gentem consolidata pace … conpendia proficiat in communis*; similar passages are found in 25 and 29.

117 *Epistolae Austrasicae*, 42. This letter was sent forwarded the emperor through bishop Iocundus of Cotrone.

Wood points out that the legal output of the period (VIth and VIIth century) "suggest(s) that the Merovingian kings legislated often".[118] Indeed the kings did, but one may wonder how much of it was truly royal legislation? Both the *Pactus Legis Salica* (probably Clovis I) and the *Lex Ribuaria* (Chlothar II and/or Dagobert I), although they do include (some) royal law, are mainly a rendering of customary law.[119] They are not royal codifications *stricto sensu*. Yet kings did legislate, as Wood rightly emphasizes. In the case of *Regnum Francorum* in the late VIth and early VIIth century, much legislation emanated from the kings Childebert II, Chlothar II, Dagobert I and Childeric II,[120] who all four made their mark as kings of Austrasia. Starting, with Wormald, from the principle that legislation was not part of the make-up of original Germanic kingship, we may at the same time accept his view that, in the VIth and VIIth centuries, an "important reason for the existence of barbarian legislation was that it projected an image of society which corresponded to the ideological aspirations, as well as the practical needs, of what we might call its articulate classes".[121] Added to this were, not long afterwards, new legal functions which were thrust upon kings.[122] Legislation and presumably at least some of the aspirations behind it had or found their place in the context of Austrasian kingship. In this, Austrasia fits the view brought forward by Murray when he emphasizes the "living and changing tradition" of Merovingian legislation against the backdrop of Roman law.[123]

Royal accessions

A very specific form of the application (and conscious representation) of royal ideology is to be found in the ways in which kings were installed. Information on this may be found with Gregory of Tours, where he describes how the Austrasians accept young Childebert II as their king, after the murder of his father Sigebert I in 575: Gregory tells us how the Austrasian leader Gundoald, "assembled the people over whom his father (=Sigebert) had reigned and proclaimed Childebert King".[124] It is again

118 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 104. See also R. Collins, 'Law and ethnic identity in the western kingdoms in the fifth and sixth centuries' in: A.P. Smyth ed., *Medieval Europeans* (New York 1998).

119 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 110. The link between the *Lex Ribuaria* and conditions in post-613 Austrasia is discussed in chapter 5 section 3.

120 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 118.

121 P. Wormald, 'Lex scripta and verbum regis. Legislation and Germanic kingship from Eric to Cnut' in: P. Sawyer and I.N. Wood ed., *Early medieval kingship* (Leeds 1977) 105-138, 132.

122 Wormald, 'Lex scripta and verbum regis', 138.

123 A.C. Murray, '"Pax et disciplina". Roman public law and the Merovingian state' in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 376-388.

124 *DLH*, V, c.1 1, translation Lewis Thorpe; ... *collectisque gentibus super quas pater eius regnum tenuerat, (Childeberthum) regem instituit.*

Gregory who reports that, seven years later, when many Austrasians had become dissatisfied with Childebert, they invited the pretender Gundoald to take over the throne. Gundoald was told that he was "invited by all the magnates of king Childebert's kingdom".[125] Obviously Austrasian magnates thought they had – or should have – a say in who was to be their king. Referring to another occasion, Fredegar confirms this impression when he writes that Clothar II in 613, although having invaded Austrasia at the invitation of Arnulf and Pippin "and other magnates", still declared that he "undertook to abide by whatever decision should, with God's help, be arrived at by a gathering of Franks chosen for that purpose".[126] The author of the Neustrian *Liber Historiae Francorum*, looking back, long after Fredegar, at the accession of Dagobert I as co-king of Clothar II in Austrasia a century before (623), reports how the "Austrasians, who are actually the Upper-Franks, gathered together, set up Dagobert as their king".[127] In Neustria and Burgundy also, the magnates held up their rights to co-decide on who would be king,[128] yet the reported instances of Austrasians claiming to have their say are rather more frequent and convincing. An "agreed language", reflecting the grammar of kingship, is developing: expressions like "the people having been gathered" (*collectisque gentibus*), or "by all the great" (*ab omnibus principibus*), or "having met all together" (*congregati in unum*) confirm that consensus of the great was an essential condition for an uncontested accession. The church, although a great producer and guardian of "agreed language", is conspicuously absent from all the formulas and ceremonies in our texts which regard the king's accession – until, that is, narratives on the Carolingians moving towards – and in the end assuming – kingship take over.

Liturgy

If the liturgical dimension hardly came into play at the installation of kings, it was, nonetheless, very much in existence in other respects. Its manifestations in our texts demonstrate on the one hand how the grammar of kingship could be applied in the ecclesiastical sphere and on the other the production of new elements for this same grammar, new "agreed language", in this case with sacred overtones. From Carolingian times several *Missae pro rege* have been preserved[129] and it is probable

125 *DLH*, VII, c.1. 36; *Veni, quia ab omnibus regni regis Childeberthi principibus invitaris...*

126 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40; *... respondebat ... iudicio Francorum electorum quicquid precedente Domino a Francis inter eosdem iudicabatur, pollicetur esset implere.* (translation: Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar*.)

127 *LHF*, 41, my translation; "*Austrasii vero Franci superiores congregati in unum, Dagobertum super se regem statuunt*".

128 Fredegarius, IV, c. 56; *... ut suum deberint regimen eligere. Passio Leudegarii,* I, 5.

129 *Sacramentary of Echternach*, ed. Y. Hen (Paris 1997).

that these continue a "late Merovingian tradition of prayers and other liturgical actions on behalf of a ruler ...".[130] Starting with the VIIth century mass texts referring to ruling Merovingian kings are composed and handed down. Judging from one of the earliest surviving texts of a royal mass, the *Missa pro Principe* which is included in the Bobbio Missal that dates from the VIIth and VIIIth century,[131] impending war may well have been one reason to celebrate a royal mass. The *Missa* prays God to award victory to the king. It also explicitly commends the army to divine protection. Its imagery is taken from the Old Testament, mainly from the Book of Judges, and the *Missa* conveys a markedly warlike atmosphere. The king is presented as a warrior who fights for God's cause and thus under God's protection – and that is all there is to it. The *Missa* does not allude to more peaceful kingly virtues – providing justice, giving alms or generally discharging a *ministerium*. The *Missa pro Principe*'s ambiance of fighting heathen peoples suggests a frontier situation, which is reflected in a recent proposal to link the *Missa pro Principe* to a Bavarian context.[132] Indeed, there is a strong probability that the *Missa*'s apparent frontier context as well as its specific emphasis on the army connect it to the Eastern sphere of the *Regnum Francorum.* In any case we may conclude that the *Missa pro Principe*, emphasizing as it does the vertical relationship between God on the one hand and the warrior king with his army on the other, while keeping silent on more generic kingly virtues and duties, reflects a rather one-sided perspective. It hardly touches concepts and ideas regarding the link between God and king on which other relevant sources – the anonymous bishop, Fredegar, the author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, Marculf and others – are much more outspoken.[133]

130 I.H. Garipzanov, *The symbolic language of authority in the Carolingian world (c. 751-877)* (Leiden 2008) 58 and Hen, *The royal patronage*.

131 R. McKitterick proposes "that the main text [of the Bobbio Missal] was written at the very end of the seventh century or early eighth century and that the additions ..., culminating in the insertion of the *Missa pro Principe*, were made in the course of the first half of the eighth century"; R. McKitterick, 'The scripts of the Bobbio Missal', in: Y. Hen, and R. Meens ed., *The Bobbio Missal. Liturgy and religious culture in Merovingian Gaul* (Cambridge 2004), 50.

132 M. Garrison, 'The missa pro principe in the Bobbio missal' in: Y. Hen and R. Meens ed., *The Bobbio Missal. Liturgy and religious culture in Merovingian Gaul* (Cambridge 2004) 187-205.

133 On the Franks as a new Israel and on the *Missa*, see M. Garrison, 'The Franks as the New Israel. Education for an identity from Pippin to Charlemagne' in: Y. Hen and M. Innes ed., *The uses of the past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2000) 114-161 and idem, 'The missa pro principe'. On symbols of authority: Garipzanov, *The symbolic language of authority*.

Section 4. "Teilreiche", kingship and identity

The current view on the successive divisions of the *Regnum Francorum* among the descendants of Clovis was set by Ewig in the 1950's.[134] This view, which seems to deny the significance of socio-cultural and political differences between the "Teilreiche", has been dominant in historiography ever since. However, it is my view that intrinsic differences between the various "Teilreiche" contributed, more strongly than Ewig and subsequent historians allow for, to the dynamics and outcomes of the division processes. Wood already qualified Ewig's view by reminding us that a reform of law carried out in 673 by bishop Leodegar of Autun under Childeric II was intended to guarantee "that judges should preserve the law and custom of each *patria*, as used to be the case".[135] Wood also states that, by the 670's, "the *Pactus Legis Salicae* was not applicable to the whole Merovingian kingdom".[136] In my view, already events in 613/614 – the modalities of Chlothar II's takeover in Austrasia and the subsequent Edict of Paris – reflect significant regional differences.[137] In clause 12 of the edict it is stated that "no judge from other provinces or regions should be appointed in a different region, so that, if (a judge) would commit something wrong in whatever way, he could be made to restore that which he had wrongly obtained from his own possessions, according to the law".[138] The supposed intention of this clause is nowadays seen as making "the royal official more responsible, since abuses of his authority could be punished by sequestering his land".[139] Thus, the issue is thought to have been "the answerability of (royal) personnel".[140] Against the background of particularism described in this section, this appears to be too restricted an interpretation. One may assume that the possessions of a corrupt administrator could always be sequestered, regardless of the location of his misdemeanors. In particular when seen in combination with the passage on the 673 reform law from the *Passio Leudegarii,* the clause from the Edict of Paris must be understood in a wider sense. In brief, the scarce information referring to regional judicial

134 Ewig, 'Die fränkischen Teilreiche'.

135 *Passio Leudegarii*, I, 7 (Wood's translation). *Interea a Childerico rege expetiunt universi, ut talia daret decreta per triam obtinuerat regna, ut uniuscuiusque patriae legem vel consuetudinem deberent, sicut antiquitus, iudices conservare, et ne de una provintia rectores in aliis intoirent ...*; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 113.

136 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 114.

137 *Chlotharii II. Edictum.*

138 *Chlotharii II. Edictum*, clause 12; *Et nullus iudex de aliis provinciis aut regionibus in alia loca ordinetur ut, si aliquid de quibuslibet condicionibus perpetraverit, de suis propriis rebus exinde quod male abstolerit iuxta legis ordine debeat restaurare.*

139 Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 13.

140 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 143.

differentiation as it is provided by our written sources, appears to hint at a real and perceived regional variety of social and geographical characteristics. In the case of Austrasia, such regional differences will have been greatly intensified by the long separation of Austrasia from the other Merovingian kingdoms during most of the VIth and VIIth centuries up to 679.

4.1. Kings in the Austrasian "Teilreich"

Austrasian kingship based on aristocratic consensus

Kings who ruled in Austrasia were of specific interest to Fredegar. In almost a third of the ninety chapters of his Fourth Book he addresses events concerning kingship in Austrasia. To us, the episodes described are often illustrative of special Austrasian elements in the king's position, although Fredegar himself in all probability did not set out to highlight such Austrasian characteristics. When Fredegar mentions the execution, on king Childebert II's orders, of four magnates,[141] this represents a royal toughness hardly paralleled in any (known) instances from Neustria or Burgundy. At the same time, this toughness presumably was a response to tenacious aristocratic opposition, which was also very characteristic of Austrasia (chapter four). The same king Childebert is depicted waging a successful war against the Thuringians,[142] a kind of action distinctly foreign to Neustrians and Burgundians. Childebert – whom we also know as an effective legislator[143] – obviously was a powerful king. At the same time kingship in Austrasia was very much a matter of consent by and consensus with the great. Fredegar is explicit in this. Above, I mentioned Chlothar II's promise regarding a gathering of the great, in 613.[144] No similar statement has been recorded of a ruling Merovingian who had just successfully invaded a rival Merovingian's territory. Fredegar also describes Dagobert I as "happily ruling over Austrasia" under the strong guidance of Arnulf, Pippin, and Chunibert.[145] Besides he thinks it relevant to explicitly mention that Dagobert took himself an Austrasian woman

141 Fredegarius, IV, c. 8. The king has Rauching, Guntram Boso, Urio and Berthefried executed.

142 Fredegarius, IV, c. 15.

143 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 102-104.

144 Fredegarius, IV, c. 33.

145 Fredegarius, IV, c. 52: *... cum Dagobertus iam utiliter regnarit in Auster ...*; c. 58: *... ab inicio quo regnare ciperat consilio primetus beatissime Arnulfi Mettensis urbis pontefice et Pippino maiorem domus usus, tante prosperitatis regale regimen in Auster regebat, ut a cunctis gentibus inmenso ordine laude haberit .... Post discessum beati Arnulfi adhuc consilius Peppino maiorem domus et Chunibertum ponteficem urbis Coloniae utens et ap ipsis fortiter admonetus ...*

during a royal tour through Austrasia.[146] Fredegar makes quite clear that Dagobert's Austrasian chief counselor Pippin, a man much admired by Fredegar, cannot neglect his fellow magnates without impunity.[147] And after Dagobert had moved the seat of his power to Neustria, the Austrasian magnates, considering "themselves hated and regularly despoiled by Dagobert",[148] did not rest until they had received Dagobert's young son Sigebert III as a king of their own[149] and they thought fit to reconfirm his kingship after Dagobert had died.[150] In his last mention of Sigebert III Fredegar depicts the young king as devastated after a crushing defeat against the Thuringians, yet reassuringly surrounded by dukes like Grimoald and Adalgisel.[151] Fredegar presents us with an Austrasian kingship that finds its strength in its symbiosis with the Austrasian great. This symbiosis, which in Fredegar's account is much more pronounced for Austrasia than for the other "Teilreiche", appears to be a constitutive element of what I would call a grammar of Austrasian identity.

Of the specific situation in Austrasia we are, furthermore, informed by the *Vita Arnulfi* and the *Vita Romarici*. When the Life of Arnulf, through its tone and narrative, suggests that the magnate Hugus, possibly Chlothar II' s mayor of the palace in Austrasia,[152] was not popular with the Austrasians, we can surmize some of the possible reasons. Whatever his function, Hugus was in any case a representative of an absentee king who ruled Austrasia from a Neustrian domicile. From the *Vita Arnulfi* we learn that king Chlothar thought it necessary to restitute treasure, which had allegedly belonged to Saint Stephen's church at Metz but had been appropriated by Hugus.[153] The Life of Arnulf also suggests a distinct distance[154] between Dagobert and Arnulf, which may have developed into outright conflict between the king and the Austrasian magnate. This

146 Fredegarius, IV, c. 59. *Anno VIII regni sui, cum Auster regio cultu circuerit, quadam puella nomen Ragnetrudae aestrati suae adscivit, de qua eo anno habuit filium nomen Sigybertum.*

147 Fredegarius, IV, c. 61. *Zelus Austrasiorum adversus eodem* (=Pippin) *vehementer surgebat ...*

148 Fredegarius, IV, c. 68. *... dum se cernebant cum Dagoberto odium incurrisse et adsiduae expoliarintur.*

149 Fredegarius, IV, c. 75. *... Dagobertus Mettis orbem veniens, cum consilio pontevecum seo et procerum, omnesque primatisque regni sui consencientebus, Sigybertum, filium suum, in Auster regem sublimavit ...*

150 Fredegarius, IV, c. 85. *... Pippinus maior domi ... et ceteris ducis Austrasiorum ... Sigybertum unanemem conspiracionem expetissent ...*

151 Fredegarius, IV, c. 87.

152 Fredegarius, IV, c. 45. Hugus (here named Chucus) is presented as an equal to the mayors Warnachar (Burgundy) and Gundeland (Neustria). Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CXXXVII.

153 In the *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 14. *... Hugus, quidam primatis procerum, datis alimoniis vel his quae pauperibus necessaria erant,* (*discum argenti*) *conparavit. Sed omnipotens Deus non passus, ut illo laicus frueretur, qui in honori beati Stephani ... consecratus fuisset; ... Hugo prepeti morte prostrato, praefatus discus Chlothario rege allatus est. Qui... iubet ... eundem velociter, suprapositis centum aureis,* (*Arnulfo*) *deferre.*

154 *Vita Arnulfi*, 12 reports on how the king, while on a royal tour in Thuringia, refuses to wait for Arnulf while the latter is retained by caring fo a sick boy. See also *Vita Arnulfi*, 18-20.

conflict is reflected in the king's furious reaction to Arnulf's intended withdrawal from court. At this occasion, Dagobert allegedly had to be restrained from killing Arnulf's sons and when in the end Arnulf did leave the court, Metz appears to have been in uproar and his friend Romaric may have had to intervene to get Arnulf safe out of the city.[155] This is rather too much to consider it just as a *topos*. The Life of Romaric, too, is informative on political reality at the Austrasian court. Romaric is said to have gained high status at the new court of Chlothar II,[156] yet he soon gave up this position to enter the monastery at Remiremont. Shortly before his death, however, abbot Romaric travelled to the "prince's palace" (*principis palacium*[157]) to "warn the king and his magnates on their danger and how to guard against things that might befall".[158] According to the Life, Romaric actually met Grimoald at this time: the *subregulus*,[159] having heard that Romaric was on his way to Metz, went to meet him halfway at night and the two men spoke together – at which occasion Grimoald is said to have promised that "he would do as they had discussed together",[160] the *Vita*, tantalizingly, not offering anything more specific. The episode may have occurred in c. 650.[161] It is possible that Grimoald and Romaric discussed the consequences of king Sigebert III's impending death (see below).

Thus, kingship within the Austrasian "Teilreich" is often represented

155 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 18-20.

156 *Vita Romarici*, c. 4.

157 *Vita Romarici*, c. 8.

158 Ibidem: … *ut regi seu proceribus eius de periculo eorum vel casu venture cavenda nuntiaret.*

159 Ibidem: … *vir magnificus Grimoaldus subregulus* … The use of the diminutive *subregulus* is remarkable. The word is also used in the *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 3, where it denotes Gundulf, mayor of the palace to Theudebert II. Wood, 'Forgery in Merovingian hagiography', 370-71, draws attention to the use of the word, seeing in its use in both *Vitae* an indication of the relationship (albeit a "problematical" one) between the two texts. A plausible reason for the use of the diminutive has not yet been convincingly presented. It can hardly be a pejorative use, because both Gundulf and Grimoald are presented in the two texts as prominent members of the protagonists' networks.

160 Ibidem: … *se facturum esse quae dicebantur pollicitus est.*

161 Following this visit to the court, Romaric made a tour of some rural monasteries, admonishing them to remain faithful to doctrine (*rura monasterii circuivit. Vita Romarici*, 8) and then returned home, where he became ill and died. Romaric's dying day may have been 8 December 650 (*Vita Amati*, II, chapter 11: *Obiit autem idem pater plenus dierum in senectute bona VI Idus Decembris, sceptrum quidem Austrasiorum tenente rege Sigiberto, Francorum vero Chlodoveo, imperante autem regum rege domino nostro Iesu Christo*. Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians* on plausible grounds, proposes 1 February 651 as the dying day of king Sigebert III. Clovis II was king 639-657. If Gerberding is right the *terminus ante quem* for Romaric's death would be 1 February 651. Actually, there is no reason to stick to the year traditionally given for Romaric's death, 653. On the other hand, there is no hard reason to exclude his dying a year or so before 650. However, the allusions to his meeting with Grimoald briefly before his (Romaric's) death, in connection with Gerberding's elegant reconstruction of the chronology of the coup, make 8 December 650 a plausible date for Romaric's death.).

within a context of discourse with and conditional consent by the great.

The lands and gentes beyond the Rhine

There is also a geographical element which distinguishes Austrasia from the other "Teilreiche". The kingdom of Austrasia included, at the beginning of the VIIth century, vast territories beyond the Rhine. The peoples living there – both Franks and other peoples, *gentes* – were linked to Merovingian authority through various ties, ranging from outright submission to arrangements concerning (periodical) tributes.[162] The permanent engagement, peaceful or warlike, of Austrasian kings with Frisians, Saxons, Thuringians and Bavarians (to say nothing for now about Wends or Avars) led to some remarkable episodes in the development of Austrasian kingship. In the VIth and the beginning of the VIIth century, an Austrasian king could mobilize the "people from beyond the Rhine"[163] against his enemies – as did Sigebert II in 574 against his brother Chilperic. He won the war, but immediately afterwards lost control of his plundering allies[164] and was murdered by agents of Fredegund. His son's succession was made possible by support by the peoples from beyond the Rhine.[165] Here, the *gentes* are assigned a role in the designation of the new king, if only by lending their military potential to the intended successor. From these and other instances it appears that the Eastern *gentes* were an influential factor in shaping Austrasian kingship. Also, Austrasian kings were judged by their magnates on how they dealt with these *gentes*. This becomes clear from Fredegar's account of Dagobert I. As long as Dagobert, ruling Austrasia, followed the counsels of Arnulf and Pippin, *gentes* from as far away as the Slav and Avar frontier paid homage to him. Fredegar implies that it was for that reason that it could rightly be said of him that no previous Frankish king had surpassed him in honour.[166] Afterwards, however, when Dagobert – now ruling from Neustria – had failed the Austrasians in the war against the Thuringians, they completely lost their faith in him.[167]

It was a major development, with long-term effects on the kingdom and kingship, when in the course of the VIIth century Merovingian authority beyond the Rhine began to decline. It began when Dagobert I stopped

162 See, for instance, Mordek, 'Die Hedenen als politische Kraft', 345-366.

163 *DLH*, IV, c. 49; *... gentes ... ultra Rhenum ...*

164 Ibidem, *Furorem gentium*.

165 *DLH*, V, c. 1.

166 Fredegarius, IV, c. 58. *...tantae prosperitatis et iustitiae amore conplexus universas sibi subditas gentes ... ut nullus de Francorum regibus precedentibus suae laudis fuisset precellentior*.

167 Fredergarius IV, c. 68. *Estaque victuria, qua Winidi contra Francos meruereunt, non tantum Sclavinorum fortitudo optenuit, quantum dementacio Austrasiorum, dum se cernebant cum Dagoberto odium incurrisse et adsiduae expoliarintur*; see also 74, describing how Dagobert negotiated away the Saxon tribute and got nothing in return for it.

enforcing the Saxon tribute.[168] It became irreversible with the defeat of Sigebert III against Radulf of Thuringia in 642.[169] The decline of royal authority among the *gentes*, as well as the fact that the kings lost the opportunity to provide their followers with war booty and plunder, made the kings in Austrasia more dependent on their Frankish magnates – and contributed greatly to the ultimate disappearance of a separate kingship in Austrasia. After the murder of Dagobert II in 679 there was no longer a separate Austrasian king.
The connection between the loss of influence beyond the Rhine and the change in the status and eventual dissolution of Austrasian kingship is twofold. First, as a consequence to the disappearance of royal authority in the East, the king lost a considerable amount of his power over his Austrasian followers, to whom he could no longer offer opportunities and guarantees beyond the Rhine and whom he could no longer coerce with military support from Germany. Second, the Austrasian leadership became less interested in having an Austrasian king of their own, as such a separate king wielded less authority now that he no longer was master of the *gentes* beyond the Rhine.

4.2. Devolutions of royal authority to Austrasia in the VIIth century

The specificity of Austrasian kingship is reflected in the ways in which, during the VIIth century, royal authority at various occasions devolved from the *Regnum Francorum* as a whole to the Austrasian kingdom. The occasions were: a) the installation of young Dagobert I as *consors regni* in 622/23; b) Dagobert I conceding the *sublimatio* of his young son Sigebert III in 633; c) Grimoald arranging an Austrasian succession after Sigebert III's death in 651; d) Chimnechild arranging the Austrasian succession of Childeric II by having him marry her daughter Bilichild in 662 and e) Austrasian aristocrats arranging the accession of Dagobert II in 675.

The devolutions each led to either the continuance or the installation of a kingship separate from a unified, Neustria-based *regnum,* a "secession" which, till the mid-VIIth century, developed a semi-permanent character. On each occasion the devolution appears to have been effected against the desire of the Neustrians and/or the Neustrian court.

622/23; Dagobert I installed.
The first king confronted with the need for devolution was Chlothar II

168 Fredegarius, IV, c. 74.
169 Fredegraius, IV, c. 87.

who, after entering Austrasia in 613 on the invitation of Arnulf, Pippin and other Austrasian magnates, soon found out that Austrasians had their own ideas on how a king should rule them. We do not know whether the gathering of Austrasian Franks to sanction the king's take-over, which Chlothar piously referred to,[170] actually was held, but we learn from the episodes discussed above from the Lives of Arnulf and Romaric that there was dissent in Austrasia during his rule. Obviously the king had his share of difficulties with his new subjects. In response to this, in 622/623 Chlothar made his son Dagobert *consors regni* and installed him as king over the Austrasians.[171] Again, we do not know in what way the consent of the Austrasian magnates was obtained – but we may be certain that they did consent, or Fredegar's upbeat account of Dagobert's Austrasian years would have had a markedly different tone. In all probability a gathering of Austrasian magnates accepted Dagobert as their king. Dagobert was advised by Austrasians and he ruled Austrasia strongly – until he succeeded his father and left for Neustria.

633; Sigebert III installed.

The Austrasian magnates, having lost their direct access to the king with Dagobert I's departure to Neustria, became very dissatisfied. They were only reconciled when Dagobert, at his turn, installed his own infant son Sigebert III at Metz. At this occasion, in 633, we are somewhat better informed on the why and how of the devolution than on the earlier occasion in 622/23.

Fredegar presents the raising of the infant Sigebert III to the kingship in Austrasia as forced by necessity. The intense dissatisfaction of the Austrasians with Dagobert's absentee rule and with his failure to successfully wind up the war in the East left the king no choice. Dagobert came to Metz and there, "on the advice of his bishops and lords and with the consent of all the great men of his kingdom, placed his son Sigebert on the throne of Austrasia ...".[172] Fredegar's report is as explicit as possible on the fact that this Austrasian *sublimatio* of Sigebert took place in a full gathering of (Austrasian) Franks. The bishops are singled out as being present and giving their consent. In all earlier references to a gathering of magnates attending the *sublimatio* of a Frankish king, the presence of bishops is never explicitly reported. It

170 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40.

171 Fredegarius, IV, c. 47. *Anno XXXVIIII Chlothariae Dagobertum filium suum consortem regni facit eumque super Austrasius regem instituit ...*

172 Fredegarius, IV, c. 75. *Anno undecimo regni Dagoberti, cum Winidi iusso Samone forteter severint et sepius, ... Dagobertus Mettis orbem veniens, cum consilio pontevecum seo et procerum, omnesque primatis regni sui conscencientebus, Sigybertum, filium suum, in Auster regem sublimavit sedemque ei Mettis civitatem habere permisit. ... Deinceps Austrasiae eorum studio limetem et regnum Francorum Winedus utiliter definasse nuscuntur.*

was Dagobert who raised his son to the kingship – but it is clear that he was forced to do it, by the very same magnates who now assented to the act. *Dux* Adalgisel and bishop Chunibert of Cologne became regents for the infant-king. In all, the account of the devolution of 633 shows a strong and self-conscious group of magnates, both secular and ecclesiastical, men who enforce – largely on their own terms – the devolution of power from Paris to Metz.

Significantly, the particularism of the Austrasians at the occasion was mirrored by a similar particularism in Neustria. When, shortly after Sigebert's installation, a second son, Clovis, was born to Dagobert in 633, the Neustrian great enforced a formal partition of the estate: "Dagobert made an agreement with his son Sigebert on the advice and at the wish of the Neustrians. All the Austrasian magnates, the bishops and all the warriors of Sigebert swore with hands raised that after Dagobert's death Neustria and Burgundy should belong to Clovis while Austrasia, which equaled (the other kingdoms) with regard to population and extent of territory, should be entirely Sigebert's".[173] This bilateral agreement between Dagobert I and Sigebert III and their mutual magnates – again with the bishops explicitly mentioned – led to Neustria-Burgundy and Austrasia continuing their separate existences after Dagobert I's death in 638. Also, following this agreement the Austrasians may have felt that, henceforth, they had the right to more or less autonomously decide on succession matters, which led to some remarkable events following the death of Sigebert III in 651.

651; Grimoald, arranges the Austrasian succession.

Fredegar leaves us completely in the dark about the arrangement of the succession after Sigebert's death. As he was a contemporary of the events and still working on his chronicle afterwards,[174] his silence was, in all probability, intentional. His audience, too, many of them Austrasian, were aware of his silence. Before dealing with the possible reasons for his silence, let us look at what we actually know about the events. This is disappointingly little, seeing how central a better insight in the events surrounding the so-called "coup" of Grimoald would be to our

173 Fredegarius, IV, c. 76 (Translation: Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar*). *... consilio Neustrasiorum eorumque admonicione per pactiones uincolum cum Sigybertum filium suum firmasse dinuscetur, at Austrasiorum omnes primati, ponteuecis citirique leudis Sigyberti manus eorum ponentes insuper, sacramentis firmauerunt ut Neptreco et Burgundia soledato ordene at regnum Chlodouiae post Dagoberti discessum aspecerit; Aoster vero idemque ordene soledato, eo quod et de populo et de spacium terre esset coaequans, ad regnum Sigyberti idemque in integretate deberit aspecere ...*

174 In Fredegarius, IV, c. 81, Fredegar writes about the refusal of the Byzantine emperor to pay tribute to the Saracens. This event can be dated to 658. So Fredegar was writing at or after that time.

understanding of the development of kingship in Austrasia.[175] Unfortunately, despite the efforts of many historians, it is impossible to reconstruct events with any degree of accuracy.[176] Not even the year in which Sigebert III died is certain anymore. Long it was thought the king died in early 656. Gerberding has proposed early 651 instead – for plausible reasons which will not be repeated here.[177] I follow this view, if only because I agree with Gerberding that this date perfectly matches the meeting at Nivelles, in late 650, of Grimoald with bishop Dido of Poitiers,[178] who would then have come together at the monastery to discuss the course of action following the king's impending decease. To this, I add the possibility that Grimoald's meeting with abbot Romaric, possibly also in 650, also concerned the king's expected death – and how to act when it occurred.[179]

Be that as it may, in 651 Sigebert was succeeded not by his son and heir apparent Dagobert (II), but – on the instigation of Grimoald – by Childebert (who only later, in Carolingian times, acquired the surname *Adoptivus*). I leave aside the intense discussion on whether Childebert was or was not a son of Grimoald, or of Sigebert, and refer to the helpful contribution Matthias Becher made to it in 1994.[180] What is more important is, that this succession provided the first case since 595 of an Austrasian king directly succeeding an Austrasian predecessor – and this was what Grimoald and the Austrasians were after. The child Dagobert was brought to Ireland by bishop Dido. Grimoald and his allies may have felt that the formal division between Neustria and Austrasia as it had been effectuated in 633 gave them the right to arrange things their own way. To a considerable part of the Austrasian great Childebert *Adoptivus*

175 See B. Krusch, 'Der Staatsstreich des fränkischen Hausmeiers Grimoald I' in: *Historische Aufsätze. Karl Zeumer zum 60. Geburtstag als Festgabe dargebracht von Freunden und Schülern* (Weimar 1910) 411-438.

176 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 48-50. See also L. Dupraz, *Le royaume des Francs et l'ascension politique des maires du palais au déclin du VIIe siècle* (Fribourg 1948), specifically *Contribution à l'histoire du Regnum Francorum pendant le troisième quart du VIIe siècle, 656-680*, 284-392.

177 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 48-50 and H. Thomas, 'Die Namenliste des Diptychon Barberini und der Sturz des Hausmeiers Grimoald', *Deutsches Archiv* 25 (1969) 17-63.

178 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano*.

179 *Vita Romarici*, c. 8. *Beatus igitur Romaricus priusquam ad diem suppremum laudabilis pervenisset, ad principis palacium eatenus tamquam prescius properasset, ut regi seu proceribus eius de periculo eorum vel casu venturo cavenda nuntiaret. Ubi cum ventum fuisset, audito per internuntios vir magnificus Grimoaldus subregulus, quod noctis tempore ad eum accedere voluisset, surgens cum facibus accensis intempestas noctis, medio itinere ei obvius fuit, aspiciensque hominem Dei mirae magnitudinis, nescio quid tamquam angelicum seu caeleste signum se super eum vidisse contremuit. Cum multaque reverentie complexus, munieribusque allatis, se facturum esse quae dicebantur pollicitus est.*

180 M. Becher, 'Der sogenannte Staatsstreich Grimoalds. Versuch einer Neubewertung' in: J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter ed., *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen 1994) 119-147.

must have counted as a legitimate king. He was allowed to rule till he died in 662.[181]
Grimoald, however, fell into the hands of the Neustrians long before and was executed by them as a traitor.[182] The Neustrians, other than the Austrasians, did not acknowledge the legitimacy of the Austrasian succession.
Why is Fredegar silent on all this? The main reason must be that the matter was very sensitive to his audience. Many of his audience were Austrasian, many other, however, were Neustrian and, of course, Burgundian. With the Neustrians opposing the succession of 651, yet with Childebert *Adoptivus* still on the Austrasian throne, there was no way Fredegar could have composed a version satisfactory to all those who read his text, or heard it being read. Personal danger may have been involved. The matter might even explain why Fredegar stopped writing his Fourth Book at the point he did. On the other hand, the idea brought forward by Ian Wood at the IMC 2008, that part of the tension which Fredegar may have felt was sublimated in the " buddy stories" with which his chronicle abounds, has a good ring to it.[183]

662; Chimnechild, arranges the Austrasian succession.
Following the death of Childebert *Adoptivus*, bringing to an end a rule of eleven years, the Austrasian queen-mother Chimnechild, having arranged for the marriage of her young daughter Bilichild with the equally young Neustrian prince Childeric, secured the latter's succession to the Austrasian throne as Childeric II.[184] By assenting to this succession, Childeric II's slightly older brother, already king in Neustria under the tutelage of his mother Balthild, effectively renounced his claims on Austrasia. To put it otherwise: the agreement of 633 was still valid. The Austrasian magnates, as whose leader now Vulfoald emerged, a *dux* who had his powerbase in the region of Verdun and Bar and in the Saar region,[185] kept their own king and court.

675; Austrasian aristocrats arranging the succession by Dagobert II.
The next devolution followed the murder of Childeric II and the pregnant Bilichild in the autumn of 675. Childeric by then had for the

181 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*; I.N. Wood, 'Fredegar's fables' in: G. Scheibelreiter and A. Scharer ed., *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna 1994) 359-366 (A) and Becher, 'Der sogenannte Staatsstreich Grimoalds', 119-147.
182 *LHF*, c. 43.
183 I.N. Wood, 'Enemies of Clovis', IMC paper presentation (1125c) 2008 and Wood, 'Fredegar's fables'.
184 See Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 222-224: "In a sense the throne of Austrasia had passed through the female line".
185 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCCXIII.

last two years been king of the whole of the *Regnum Francorum* and it was Neustrians who murdered him for reasons which are not relevant here. In the confusion which followed the assassination, the Austrasians ensured themselves once more – as it turned out: for the last time – of a king of their own. They fetched themselves Dagobert II from his Irish exile. Dagobert, son of the late Sigebert III, succeeded as king of the Austrasians. There is no way of knowing what role Dagobert II's mother Chimnechild may have played in in her son's accession. What is clear, however, is that the Austrasian magnates by now made out among themselves who was to be their king, without concerning themselves about the Neustrians (See also the next section).
In 679 Dagobert II was murdered. It is not possible to name motifs or culprits with certainty,[186] but in all probability Neustrians led by Ebroin were behind it.[187] The king left no successor. At this juncture, the Austrasians did not install a successor for their late king. The primary motive may have been the lack of an obvious successor.[188] A secondary motive may have been the lack of an adequate powerbase for an Austrasian king now that Austrasian authority beyond the Rhine had declined. The Austrasians started or intensified war against Ebroin.[189] The Austrasian aristocrats, having lost much of their clout in the East, reoriented themselves toward Neustria.

Section 5. Policy and kingship

Kingship, mayors and monasticism
Most of the development of a grammar of kingship and of identity in Austrasia was the result of day-to-day policy-making, of the policy of kings and magnates dealing with daily affairs to achieve specific purposes. The account in the *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano* of mayor Grimoald meeting with bishop Dido of Poitiers at the monastery of Nivelles in 650 presents us with a clear if momentary view of such

186 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 231-234.
187 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 231-234; *Vita Wilfridi*.
188 The Neustrian king Theuderic III eventually had two sons, Clovis (III) and Childebert (III), of which probably only Clovis had been born by 679, being two years or so at the time. In Austrasia, there was no obvious successor. On the other hand, the later Chilperic II will have been about seven years by this time and living in a monastery under the name of Daniel. He may have been the son of the murdered Childeric II.
189 *LHF*, c. 46: "... the kings having died, Martin and the younger Pippin ... turned in hatred against Ebroin. Having gathered a large following of Austrasians, they sent the force against King Theuderic and Ebroin".

politics at work.[190] Place and context chosen for the meeting are revealing. Grimoald and Dido meet in a monastery that was founded by Grimoald's mother Itta and where his sister Gertrude was abbess. Also, monastic practice at Nivelles was strongly influenced by Irish monasticism.[191]
In the same period Grimoald also met with Romaric, abbot of Remiremont. The meeting was not at the monastery, but Romaric had come to the mayor in his quality of abbot. Romaric's monastery, having been founded from Luxeuil, had undergone Irish influence too.[192] Both Nivelles and Remiremont functioned as "powerhouses of prayer",[193] where uninterrupted prayer and psalm singing were supposed to contribute to the stability of the realm. At Nivelles, in the 640's, *laus perennis* was practiced.[194] At Remiremont the first abbot, Amatus, had instituted the same practice.[195]
The context of both meetings of Grimoald suggests that a monastic environment provided an ambiance for conducting matters of state. The link between this monastic context and the grammar of kingship is a strong one. Even though it is Grimoald and not the king who is depicted in the two episodes, he was at the time the king's chief minister. To look at him as a kind of "proto-Martel" bossing it over a "fainéant" Sigebert III would, in my view, be anachronistic. However, it is also clear from other sources that kingship increasingly became associated with the monastic atmosphere. In Austrasia, royal involvement with monasticism went far. The communities of Cugnon (644) and Stavelot-Malmédy (645/650) were founded on behalf of Sigebert III.[196] Also "private" foundations like Nivelles (640), Fosses (651), and Echternach (698) were indirectly but closely associated with kingship through their founders' relations with the court. These and similar foundations with royal connections were bearers of the monastic expansion in Austrasia. The involvement of the Pippinids and Carolingians with Austrasian monasticism intensified throughout the late VIIth and VIIIth century. Fosses was made a royal monastery

190 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano.*
191 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 2, 5 and 7. More will be said on this in chapter three.
192 Amatus, who had co-founded the monastery with Romaric, had been sent to Remiremont by abbot Eustasius, Columbanus' first successor at Luxeuil.
193 P. Brown, *The rise of western Christendom. Triumph and diversity, A.D. 200-1000* (2nd edition; Malden 2003) 219.
194 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 3. *...diebus ac noctibus in agone sancto vigiliis, orationibus, sanctis lectionibus et ieiuniis contra spiritaliam nequitiam potuisset dimicare*; c. 7. *... per totam noctem cum sororibus psalmis et ymnis et orationibus duxit vigiliam*. On *laus perennis* as instituted at Saint Maurice d'Agaune in Burgundy, whence it spread to monasteries in Gaul, see B.H. Rosenwein, 'Perennial prayer at Agaune' in: S. Farmer and B.H. Rosenwein ed., *Monks and nuns, saints and outcasts. Religion in medieval society. Essays in honour of Lester K. Little* (Ithaca and London 2000) 37-56.
195 *Vita Amati*, c. 10. Amatus was influenced by the practice of Saint Maurice d'Agaune, where he had spent his early years as monk, probaby as an oblate (*Vita Amati,* c. 2).
196 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, ed. T. Kölzer, MGH DD Mer.1 (Hanover 2001) 80 and 81.

by Pippin the Short after he became king.[197] Dierkens captions the development as follows: "Le contexte particulier de l'Austrasie en général ... conditionnera la nomination d'abbés favorables aux Pippinides ...".[198] That royal involvement with monasteries in VIIth century-Austrasia existed apart from the Pippinids is clear from the fact that during periods of Pippinid adversity – notably after the execution of Grimoald – kings and the court kept sponsoring foundations. From the rule of Childeric II the text of seven charters survives which bestow privileges or gifts on monasteries or confirm these.[199] One of the charters was strongly sponsored by the king's mother, Chimnechild.[200] Twenty more lost – or presumably lost – charters of Childeric II are mentioned as *deperdita*.[201] Among the *deperdita*, moreover, one charter of donation from Childebert Adoptivus is mentioned[202] and six are mentioned from Dagobert II.[203] Also, kings in Austrasia already actively donated in the preceding years, as becomes clear from some *deperdita* atrributed to Dagobert I's Austrasian years – notably four charters connecting monastic donations[204] – and from two grants by Sigebert III (apart from those to Cugnon and Stavelot-Malmédy already mentioned above) to the churches of Cologne and Metz[205] and to bishop Chunibert.[206] Of the twelve *deperdita* connected to Sigebert III, eight concern grants to Austrasian churches or monasteries.[207]

Pippin of Herstal took upon himself the patronage of monasteries which had been associated with the Austrasian kings Sigebert III, Childeric II and Dagobert II. At the same time, monastic and church policy provided him with an instrument to expand his power in Neustria following his victory at Tertry in 687. Gerberding has reconstructed how Pippin's

197 A. Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres entre Sambre et Meuse, VIIe-XIe siècles* (Sigmaringen 1985) 77 and J. Laporte, 'Les monastères Francs et l'avènement des Pippinides', *Revue Mabillon* 30 (1930) 1-30.

198 Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 286. See also M. Polfer, ed., *L'évangélisation des régions entre Meuse et Moselle et la fondation de l'abbaye d'Echternach (Ve-IXe siècle)* (Luxembourg 2000).

199 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 99, 102 (which is a fabrication, replacing a charter lost in the Viking invasions),104 (which is a fabrication, but one to replace a charter that had probably once existed, since it was mentioned in a later one), 107, 108, 110 and 111.

200 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 99.

201 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, ed. T. Kölzer, MGH DD Mer.2 (Hanover 2001), deperdita 265-285, all but one concerning grants to monasteries.

202 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, deperdita 244.

203 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, deperdita 322-327.

204 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, deperdita 159, 160, 192, 193.

205 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 77.

206 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 79.

207 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, deperdita 209-212 and 215-218.

"Klosterpolitik" helped lay the basis of Pippinid power in the West.[208] Seen from this perspective, Wood's observation that Pippin's involvement in the church "does not amount to a monastic or an ecclesiastical policy comparable to that of Balthild fifty years earlier"[209] deserves modification. The involvement of Austrasian kings and mayors – in that (chronological) order – with monasteries had, already by 700, a long tradition. Also, it appears to have been structural and pointed ahead to Carolingian royal practice. Austrasian royal "Klosterpolitik" proved to be politically relevant.

Merovingians and Pippinids

For our understanding of the development of policy in relation to kingship, it is revealing to explore the ways in which Pippin of Herstal and his son Charles Martel dealt with Merovingian kingship in the years following the murder of the last "Austrasian" king Dagobert II in 679. Our main sources for this are the Neustrian *Liber Historiae Francorum* from 727, the Austrasian *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* from probably 787 and the first section of the *Annales Mettenses Priores* from c. 805.

The *Liber Historiae Francorum* presents us with an account of the relationship between the Austrasian leaders and the successive Merovingians. Its first mention of Pippin shows him appearing, together with Martin, *dux* of Champagne,[210] on the political stage after "the kings had died".[211] Gerberding and Wood are of the opinion that the kings in question would have been Chlothar III (d. 673) and Childeric II (d. 675). Wood has developed views on who may have been the "elusive" followers of Dagobert II,[212] but is not completely convincing in positioning Pippin and Martin in this context. According to the *Liber Historiae Francorum* they actually did "dominate"[213] in Austrasia and it is therefore hard to see how Dagobert II could have become king without their support – at least.[214] In this context, it would be conceivable that Dagobert II's Austrasian supporters – who may have included the Alsatian magnate Adalrich Eticho, although he definitely was no friend to Pippin and

208 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*. See also H.H. Anton, 'Klosterwesen und Adel im Raum von Mosel, Saar und Sauer in merowingischer und frühkarolingischer Zeit' in: G. Kiesel and J. Schroeder ed., *Willibrord-Festschriften zum 1250. Todestag* (Luxembourg 1989) 96-124 and P. Fouracre, 'Observations on the outgrowth of Pippinid influence in the "Regnum Francorum" after the Battle of Tertry (687-715)', *Medieval Prosopography* 5 (1984) 1-31 (B).

209 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 265.

210 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCXXXVII.

211 *…decedentibus regis*, *LHF*, c. 6; see also Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 231-234 and Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 47 ff.

212 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 233-234.

213 *LHF*, c. 46: *... Martinus et Pippinus ... dominabantur in Austria ...*

214 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 80.

Martin[215] – aimed at having "their" king recognised to be the lawful king of all the Franks, replacing Ebroin's reinstated Theuderic III. This would help explain why Ebroin's Neustrian supporters hated Dagobert so much and named him an "execrable tyrant",[216] and why the Austrasian leaders Martin and Pippin "turned in hatred against Ebroin".[217] I think it plausible that the war against Ebroin started before Dagobert II was murdered.[218] As stated in the previous section, their war against the Neustrians may also be understood in the context of a westward reorientation of the Austrasian leadership now that their influence beyond the Rhine had waned. The account of the *Liber* suggests that Pippin and Martin, not Ebroin, started the armed conflict,[219] which however led to their defeat at Lucofao (679) and to Martin's death by treason. This would fit a picture in which Austrasian leaders, following the temporary deposition of Theuderic III and Ebroin and the subsequent take-over of the *Regnum Francorum* by Childeric II and Vulfoald in 673, intended to restore the hegemony over Neustria as it had existed till Childeric II's murder in 675. It is to be remarked that Pippin named his second son Grimoald, obviously no longer apprehensive of the association.

In the midst of these developments Merovingian kingship kept providing the legitimate framework for governing the realm. Yet after the murder of Dagobert II no separate Austrasian king was installed by Pippin or other Austrasians. Possibly, the concept of a proper Austrasian king had lost much of its relevance with the decline of royal authority beyond the Rhine. Neustrian kings became the more natural object for Austrasian power brokerage. Wizened by his defeat at Lucofao, Pippin went to work prudently. Following Tertry (687), Pippin refrained from putting the king under direct Austrasian tutelage: Theuderic III stayed on the throne in Neustria and in 691 was succeeded by Clovis III without any apparent meddling by Pippin.[220] In 695 Childebert III succeeded, again without any hitch.[221] As we saw, Childebert was considered a very convincing king by the LHF's author.[222] To be sure, Pippin increasingly brought the kings

215 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 233-234. Ebling, *Prosopographie*, VIII.

216 *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 33.

217 *LHF*, c. 46. *... hii duces in odium versi contra Ebroinum, exercitum plurimum Austrasiorum commotum, contra Theudericum regem et Ebroinum aciem dirigunt.*

218 In fact, as the *LHF* says nothing about Dagobert II (apart from telling us that he was taken on a "pilgrimage" to Ireland after his father died) it is not possible to match the chronology of its report with Dagobert II's reign. It would be feasible to place the battle of Lucofao (late summer 679, according to Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 23) before the murder of Dagobert II, which is supposed to have taken place in on 23 december of the same year. See on the war of 679 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 231-234.

219 *LHF*, c. 46. *... in odium versi ... aciem dirigunt.*

220 *LHF*, c. 49.

221 Ibidem.

222 *LHF*, c. 49 and c. 50.

under his tutelage, working first through Norbert and, following him, his son Grimoald II. Yet Pippin relied on subtle mechanisms of power-brokerage – like monastic and church policy – rather than on directly steering the king.[223]

Things came to a head when, following Pippin's death in 714, the Neustrians, first under Dagobert III and, following his death (714), under Chilperic II (Daniel[224]) and mayor Raganfred tried, not without initial success, to break the Austrasian hegemony and for a time regained control of the West. These developments prompted Charles Martel to once again put up a king of his own, Chlothar IV, in 717[225] – and, following Chlothar's death,[226] as yet to pursue and obtain from Eudo of Aquitaine king Chilperic's delivery into his, Charles', hands. This is the point where the author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* finishes his account.

The *Continuations* at the close of the last book of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* were written some fifty years after the account of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* was finished. They repeat in their first ten *capita* the final ten *capita* of the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, adding to the original text a number of passages carrying additional details. These mainly suggest an Austrasian perspective of the author. From the eleventh *caput* onward, the *Continuationes* fall silent on the Merovingians. The last Merovingian kings, starting with Dagobert III, are completely neglected by the author. On the other hand, from *caput* eleven onward Charles Martel is named *princeps* and the author – although quite aware that Charles is not a king – rapidly develops Charles into a warrior with Christ on his side,[227] a warrior who in the end receives honorable embassies from the Pope and divides "kingdoms"[228] among his sons like a true king would have done, having "ruled"[229] for twenty-five years. The author of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* quite consciously and effectively provides the fitting narrative for the transfer of legitimacy to Charles Martel and his descendants – a transfer which was ideologically carried by spiritual and military manifestations of piety.

The first part of the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, again some twenty-five years younger, provide us with an account on how the pious *princeps*[230] Pippin dealt with the Merovingian kings. The account is completely colored by

223 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 92-115.

224 Following the death without heir of Dagobert III, the Neustrians led by mayor Raganfred made a cleric, Daniel – who may have been the son of Childeric II, to their king under the name of Chilperic II. *LHF*, 52; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 267-268.

225 *LHF*, c. 53, *... regemque sibi statuit Chlotharium nomine.*

226 Ibidem.

227 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 13, *belligerator ... Christo auxiliante.*

228 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 23, *regna dividit.*

229 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 24, *rexit*.

230 *AMP*, passim.

Carolingian hindsight. Young Pippin is depicted as a David, implying that Theuderic III is a Saul.[231] Also, Theuderic is depicted as a non-Austrasian and almost foreign king, he is "king of the Western Franks, who name themselves Neustrians".[232] His pride and his obstinacy (like Saul's) justify Pippin waging war on him.[233] At the same time Pippin is shown to hold up his formal respect (*pietas*) for the king and to recognize royal successions,[234] although the mayor does so "while having all royal privileges".[235] Also Charles Martel is shown by the *Annales Mettenses Priores* to respect the legitimate king. Having got hold of Chilperic II he "deals with him full of clemency"[236] – the author withholding the fact that the king died almost immediately after having been delivered to Charles.

Politics reflected in hagiography

The effect of politics on the grammar of kingship is also reflected in hagiography. The *Visio Baronti*, written about 680 and reporting the heavenly vision of a Neustrian nobleman who had shortly before entered monastic life, presents the late bishop Dido of Poitiers as one who is being punished in hell.[237] This may reflect an animosity of the author against the deceased bishop, but it may also follow from the author's condemnation of Dido's role in the abduction of young Dagobert II.[238] It is quite possible that the author, from a Neustrian perspective, took a dim view of the events following Sigebert III's death. As said above, the Austrasians had a different perspective and accepted Childebert *Adoptivus* as king until his death (662). Later, following the murder of Childeric II (675), they felt fully justified to make Dagobert II their king. The early VIIIth-century *Vita Wilfridi* is clear on this. Its author, the Anglo-Saxon Stephen of Ripon, expresses Wilfrid's conviction that Dagobert II had lawfully been made king in Austrasia – through the instrumentality of Wilfrid himself, to be sure.[239] Yet the author chooses also to include an account of Wilfrid's consternation at hearing of the subsequent murder of the king and at experiencing the hostility of Ebroin's supporters.[240] The *Vita* makes clear that the Austrasians' perspective on Dagobert's legitimacy differed markedly from the Neustrians' – or at least from Ebroin's.

The author of another Life, the early VIIIth-century *Vita Boniti*, shows awareness of the change which royal power went through from the

231 *AMP*, 1.
232 *AMP*, 5. ... *rex occidentalium Francorum, quos illi Niwistrius dicunt*.
233 *AMP*, 7.
234 *AMP*,12, 14-16 and 18.
235 *AMP*, 16. ... *totius regna habens privilegia*.
236 *AMP*, 25.
237 *Visio Baronti*, c. 17.
238 Hen, Utrecht Lectures and Hen, 'The structure and aims', 477 ff.
239 *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 28.
240 *Vita Wilfridi*, *c.* 33.

mid-VIIth century onward. He represents Sigebert III as a king acting of his own power,[241] whereas Theuderic III is described as ruling under the "primacy" of Pippin.[242] Similarly, the VIIIth-century *Vita Landiberti Vetustissima*, probably written by a monk from Liège,[243] depicts Childeric II as a *gloriosus dominus* and *rex*, whose personal protection is crucial to bishop Lambertus' position,[244] and condemns the king's murderers as godless men.[245] At the same time the author attributes supraterritorial significance to the *princeps* Pippin, whose star began to rise in the years following Childeric's assassination. The use of the name Europe (*Eoruppe*) to indicate the context of the regions over which Pippin exercised power is quite remarkable.[246] In the *Vita Hugberti*, also an Austrasian work written at Liège and dating from shortly after 743,[247] the transition of the royal grammar from Merovingian to Carolingian rulers is complete. Omitting all references to the Merovingians, the work invests mayor of the palace Carloman, the "most noble man of God, prince Carloman", with an almost sacral role at the transfer of bishop Hubertus' body to Andaginum.[248] Thus hagiography, through these unprompted and unrelated text-passages, reflects in its textual coloring the shift from traditionally legitimate Merovingian kingship as it existed in c. 650 to a new kind of sacral rulership as it arose ultimately with the Carolingians toward c. 750. It is a shift which derives much of its dynamics from its Austrasian context. Following this shift, Merovingian kings are very much passé. Henceforth they will be presented as such. Einhard's characterisation, in his *Vita Karoli Magni*, of the ineffectiveness of the last Merovingians, who allegedly travelled around in an ox-drawn chariot, is typical in this respect.[249] Einhard's description represents intentional ridicule. It is an expression of the *damnatio memoriae* to which the

241 *Vita Boniti,c.* 2. It is Sigebert himself who hands Bonitus the ring which makes hem referendary at the king's court.

242 *Vita Boniti*, c. 5. *... sub Theoderico principe Pippinus regni primatum tenens atque curam palacii gerens ...*

243 *Vita Landiberti vetustissima*.

244 *Vita Landiberti vetustissima*, c. 5; after the king's assassination Lambertus is driven from his bishopric. The implication that Vulfoald obviously did not protect him makes it probable that up to then Lambertus had been under the king's protection.

245 *Vita Landiberti vetustissima*, c. 4 and 5.

246 *Vita Landiberti vetustissima*, c. 7: *In illo tempore erat princeps Pippinus super plurimas regionis et civitatis sitas Eoruppe*; Krusch (p. 309) point out that the phrase appears to be borrowed from the *Vita Servatii Vetusta*.

247 *Vita Hugberti*, introduction Krusch, 473-475.

248 *Vita Hugberti,* c. 20. *... vir Dei nobilissimus princeps Carlomannus ... una cum uxore suo atque obtimatibus suis ... venerunt ad Sanctum Dei Hugbertum ... et laudaverunt Deum ... Tunc iam dictus princeps una cum sodalibus suis arripuit corpus illius sancti, et inponens eum feretrum, gloriam et hymnorum vocibus cum magno honore, cum crucibus et candelabris et turibus plurimis et reliquiis sanctorum multorum patrocinia.*

249 Einhard, *Einhardi vita Karoli Magni*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SSRG in usum scholarum 25 (Hanover and Leipzig 1911), c. 1.

Merovingians became subject in Carolingian times. Hagiography did its part here, too.

Section 6. Kingship assumed by the Carolingians, 751; some conclusions

In 751, king Childeric III was deposed and stripped of his royal powers. Pippin III became king in his stead. This is all we know for certain. Much has been said and written about this event.[250] Yet all details that go beyond the bare facts mentioned above remain, to a degree, conjectural. It is said that Childeric, after being deposed, was tonsured and sent off to live out his days in a monastery.[251] This is not certain, either. It is just the official presentation of events in the *Annales Regni Francorum*.
The reason for the uncertainty is the ambiguity of our sources – as well as interest they all have in the event they report. The three main versions follow here.

Three accounts of the dynastic transfer
The text closest to the event, both in time (almost contemporaneous) as well as in personal interest (because sponsored by Pippin's uncle Childebrand), is the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*,[252] in the partition which is best known as the *Continuationes* to Fredegar's Fourth Book. The author writes: "It now happened that with the consent and advice of all the Franks the most excellent Pippin submitted a proposition to the Apostolic See, and having first obtained its sanction, was made king, and Bertrada queen. In accordance with that order, anciently required, he was chosen king by all the Franks, consecrated by the bishops and received the hommage of the great men" (translation Wallace-Hadrill).[253]

250 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 290-293 presents a concise and plausible overview of events and context. Dated, but very helpful, is: W. Wattenbach and W. Levison, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter. Vorzeit un Karolinger* 4 vols. (Weimar 1952-1963). On French coronation rituals see A. Bonnefin, *Sacre des rois de France* (Limoges 1982). On the anointment of kings and the coronation of emperors see C. Bouman, *Sacring and crowning. The development of the Latin ritual for the anointing of kings and the coronation of an emperor before the eleventh century* (Groningen 1957).

251 *Annales Regni Francorum, s.a.* 750.

252 The *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* will be discussed in chapter four. For reference: Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*.

253 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), IV, c. 33. *Quo tempore una cum consilio et consensu omnium Francorum missa relatione ad sede apostolica auctoritate praecepta praecelsus Pippinus electione totius Francorum in sedem regni cum consecratione episcoporum et subiectione principum una cum regina Bertradane, ut antiquitus ordo deposcit, sublimatur in regno.*

The report given in the *Annales Regni Francorum*, of which the relevant content dates from around 790,[254] is the most detailed. In time it is almost as close as the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*. It provides, under the years 749 and 750, the version which has become most widely known but which represents also, most blatantly, a legitimistic Carolingian purpose. "Bishop Burchard of Würzburg and the priest and chaplain Folrad were sent to Pope Zacharias in Rome, to consult the *pontifex* on matters concerning kings as they were at that time in Francia, who did have as much as the name of king, but no royal power at all. Through whom the *pontifex* aforementioned let it be known that it would be better to call him king with who was vested the fullness of power. And using his authority, he commanded Pippin to be made king. In the following year, according to the authorization by the Roman *pontifex*, Pippin was acclaimed as king of the Franks and, according to the dignity of that honor, anointed with sacred oil by the holy hand of archbishop Boniface, of blessed memory, and raised by the Franks to the kingship in the city of Soissons. Now Childeric, who was falsely called king, was tonsured and sent toward a monastery".[255]
The *Annales Mettenses Priores* (c. 805) have most distance to the event, in time and in in tone. They say: "In this year (750) after consultation of the Roman pope Zacharias, the prince Pippin was installed as king of the Franks, having been anointed by archbishop Boniface. From which event the fame of his strength and the fear of his power went all over the world".[256]

The dynastic transfer and Austrasian identity
This is not the place to decide on or even discuss the relative merit of each

254 cf. Collins, 'Law and ethnic identity'; R. McKitterick, *History and memory in the Carolingian world* (Cambridge 2005). On rituals of royalty in a wider context, see C. Cannadine and S. Price ed., *Rituals of royalty. Power and ceremonial in traditional societies* (Cambridge 1993).

255 *Annales Regni Francorum, s.a.* 749 and 750. *DCCXLVIIII. Burchardus Wirziburgensis episcopus et Folradus presbyter capellanus missi sunt Romam ad Zachariam papam, ut consulerent pontificem de causa regum, qui illo tempore fuerunt in Francia, qui nomen tantum regis, sed nullam potestatem regiam habuerunt.; per quos praedictus pontifex mandavit, melius esse illum vocari regem, apud quem summa potestatis consisteret; dataque auctoritate sua iussit Pippinum regem constitutui. DCCL. Hoc anno secundum Romani pontificis sanctionem Pippinus rex Francorum appelatus est et ad huius dignitatem honoris unctus sacra unctione manu sanctae memoriae Bonifacii archiepiscopi et elevatus a Francis in regno in Suesssionis civitate. Hildericus vero, qui false rex vocabatur, tonsoratus est et in monasterium missus.*

256 *AMP, s.a.* 750. *Anno dominicae incarnationis DCCL. Hoc anno ex consulto Zachariae papae urbis Romae Pippinus princeps a Bonefacio archiepiscopo unctus rex Francorum constituitur. Unde rumor potentiae eius et timor virtutis transiit in universis terras.*

of the three versions.[257] What matters here, in the context of this study, is the degree to which the transfer of royal power as it was perceived in each of our texts reflects elements relevant to Austrasian identity. Kingship in Austrasia is addressed as a means to help define that identity. From this point of view, the following observations may be made on the transfer of royal power in 751.

All three of our texts report that papal advice was sought after. Only the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, however, reports that papal advice was sought "with the consent and advice of all the Franks". The *Annales Regni Francorum* mention the advice and the involvement of the Franks – Pippin is "acclaimed" (*appelatus est*) and "raised by the Franks" (*elevatus a Francis*) – but only after the papal commitment has been extensively reported. Also, the *Annales Regni Francorum* introduce archbishop Boniface, who allegedly anoints Pippin.[258] This is also reported by the *Annales Mettenses Priores* which, however, leave out any reference to the involvement of the Franks.

The *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, the text that is closest to the event (which does not in any way warrant its authority), has nothing on Boniface or on anointment. Instead, it refers to Pippin's *consecratio*, by bishops (plural). Two interesting elements which both younger texts do not report are, first, the report that Bertrada shared in her husband's elevation and was made queen and, second, the observation that all was done according to the demands of the order of old (*ut antiquitus ordo deposcit*). According to Wallace-Hadrill, the including of Bertrada in the ceremony would indicate that not just Pippin, but his family is raised to the kingship.[259] The reference to the "order of old" is remarkable, since we have a completely unique situation on our hands: a king being raised from a new dynasty, after the legitimate king has just been deposed. What

257 E. Goosmann, *Memorable crises. Carolingian historiography and the making of Pippin's reign, 750-900* (diss. University of Amsterdam 2013). A summary of the historiographic discussion on the deposition of the last Merovingian and the coup of Pippin is presented on 159-204. See also K.-U. Jäschke, 'Frühmittelalterliche Festkrönungen', *Historische Zeitschrift* 211 (1970) 566-588; idem, 'Bonifatius und die Königserhebung Pippins des Mittleren' in: H. Bannasch and H.-P. Lachmann ed., *Aus Geschichte und ihren Hilfswissenschaften. Festschrift für Walter Heinemeyer zum 65. Geburtstag* (Marburg 1979) 25-54 and J. Semmler, *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751 und die fränkische Königssalbung* (Düsseldorf 2003), *passim*.

258 The *ARF* also name the places of the ceremony: Soissons. In this context we may remind ourselves that Soissons at one time had placed itself under the authority of king Childebert II of Austrasia (589; *DLH*, IX, 36; Schneider, *Königswahl und Königserhebung*, 152-153.

259 Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar*, 102, note 2. See on the context of medieval rituals G. Althoff, 'Variability of rituals in the Middle Ages' in: G. Althoff, J. Fried and P.J. Geary ed., *Medieval concepts of the past. Ritual, memory, historiography* (Cambridge 2002) 71-88.

ordo would provide for such an expediency?[260]
To summarize: the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* is clearest on the events. It emphasizes that things were set in motion with the consent and advice of all, that the pope was consulted, that the consecration, which included Bertrada, was performed (in whatever form) by bishops and that the great submitted themselves. The account of the *Annales Regni Francorum* has much more the feel to it of being composed to justify events after the fact, providing a line of reasoning as well as reporting that Boniface anointed Pippin – a report that cannot really be corroborated.[261] The *Annales Mettenses Priores* have nothing to add to this. On the whole, one would incline to prefer the account of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*. On authority, then, of these *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* we would conclude that for the change of dynasty in 751 the agreement of all the great was needed, that ecclesiastical authorization was deemed indispensable and that actual proceedings took place in accordance with ritual rooted in tradition. Although Pippins accession concerned the *Regnum Francorum* as a whole, one may observe in the ceremony of 751 two elements which in the previous period had strongly developed in Austrasia: first, the mobilizing of ecclesiastical support (and it is quite conceivable that later authors would add the anointment as a fitting coping-stone) and, second, the prominent role of the aristocracy in determining who was to be king. In this context it is relevant that the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* uses the expression *sublimatur in regno*. This echoes the words used by Fredegar reporting on the installation of Sigebert III by his father as king of Austrasia, at which occasion all the great and bishops present in Metz had to agree.[262]

Conceptual evolution of kingship
In the course of this chapter, our analysis of some major narrative texts

260 *Ordo* is a very traditional term. It could also be translated as "ritual" or "liturgy". It indicates a very traditional liturgical procedure. In fact, *Ordo* implies a liturgical guidance for a ceremony. It is purely clerical in character (Heidecker, conversation, 2012). See also G. Ellard, *Ordination anointings in the western church before 1000 A.D.* (Cambridge 1933); C. Erdmann, *Forschungen zur politischen Ideenwelt im Frühmittelalter* (Berlin 1951) (on non-Roman elements in the Frankish imperial title); M. Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons. The origin of the royal anointing ritual* (Berlin 1985) and P. Buc, *Dangers of ritual. Between early medieval texts and social scientific theory* (Princeton 2001).

261 See for the discussion on whether or not Pippin was anointed by Boniface: Jäschke, 'Bonifatius und die Königserhebung Pippins' (sceptical on Boniface's role) and J. Jarnut, 'Wer hat Pippin 751 zum König gesalbt?', *Frümittelalterliche Studien* 16 (1982) 45-57 (gives the benefit of doubt).

262 Fredegarius, IV, c. 75. *Dagobertus Mettis orbem veniens, cum consilio pontevecum seo et procerum, omnesque primatis regni sui conscencientebus, Sigybertum, filium suum, in Auster regem sublimavit*. On Merovingian royal succession see also C. Courtois, 'L'avènement de Clovis II et les règles d'accession au trône chez les Mérovingiens', *Mélanges d'Histoire du Moyen Age dédiés à la mémoire de Louis Halphen* (Paris 1951) 155-164.

(*Vita Columbani*, the Fourth Book of Fredegar's Chronicle, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and the first part of the *Annales Mettenses Priores*) revealed an evolution in kingship and in its context – a context which includes the sacred and the aristocracy.

The conceptual development concerning kingship fitted within a general tendency in the VIIth century to conceive of kingship in more liturgical and biblical terms. The conception of kingship as a *ministerium Dei* is an expression of this. In addition, in Austrasia Foilan, Ultan and others, often close to the king or their court, contributed to the influx of concepts present in Irish texts– including the role of *sapientes* and their prophesies and blessings, and the idea of the numinosity of kings.

There was a strong element of electivity in kingship. Whereas no early-medieval king ever succeeded as a matter of course,[263] always needing the *approbatio* and the *acclamatio*, kings in Austrasia may have needed both more strongly than kings in the other Frankish *regna*. In the heat of the 613 crisis, Chlothar II had referred to the *iudicium electorum Francorum*. Regardless of what became of his intention – if genuine –, one thing is certain: neither Chlothar II nor his son and successor Dagobert I could be certain of their kingship in Austrasia while they kept trying to rule that kingdom from a Neustrian base. Both had uneasy links with the old, pre-612 aristocracy in Austrasia. The vulnerability which this meant for kingship in the East was heightened after the military disaster of 639. Austrasian kings henceforth had to make do without the military clout which until then had been provided by the *gentes* east of the Rhine.

The proper character of Austrasia was a factor in the various devolutions of royal power which characterize VIIth-century developments in the *Regnum Francorum*. In other words: these devolutions to a large degree followed from the cultural differences between the "Teilreiche" involved, differences which in their turn led to the uneasiness of Chlothar II's or Dagobert I's rule in the East. An expression of all this was the fact that the Austrasians thought that in 633 they had acquired the right to arrange for their own royal successions. After Dagobert II's death (679), however, the idea lost its attractiveness. There was no longer an eastern power base to rest Austrasian kingship upon.

The Pippinids gradually developed into the successors of Austrasian kingship. Having started out as prominent courtiers of the king and magnates in their own right, they became partners in the "Klosterpolitik" of the Austrasian king Sigebert III. The policy provided a model for later years, when Tertry had changed the context decisively. The *Liber Historiae Francorum* is our closest narrative witness to Pippin II's consolidation policy, working through bishoprics and monasteries.[264] Soon enough he

263 Nelson, 'Inauguration rituals' 151.

264 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*.

and his successors took bolder steps. Parallel to this policy, legitimacy in Austrasia, which had been exclusively reserved for kings, passed to mayors – to a degree.

For the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, written towards 805, betray uneasiness on the dismissal of the Merovingians and, conversely, an obsession with legitimacy. The text abounds with Old Testament models and with references to Christian duties and royal correctness. And there is the alliance with the aristocracy. The *Osterliudi* (who by the time the *Annales* were written probably did no longer use the terms "Austrasian" and " Austrasia") saw reflected in the *Annales* a consensus between the ruler and his magnates. Such a consensus, which formed the basis of legitimacy and authority in Austrasia, is both identity-driven as well as identity-shaping. At the same time, it does not solve or exclude tensions. The *Annales*' approach to kingship combines conceptual ripeness with existential unease and lends a forced feeling to the text which, perhaps, reflects an ambiguity.

Such ambiguity is proper to kingship. In early-medieval kingship, it finds an expression in the tension between the king and kingship being conceived as essentially inviolate, subject only to God, and the principle of electivity. It is illustrated in Austrasia. Here, electivity had a practical significance. The Austrasian great succeeded in getting kings of their own. But when, in 651, Grimoald arranged an Austrasian, yet non-Merovingian, succession, this brought him the indignation of the Neustrians, with fatal results to himself. It is significant that, at the same time, the Austrasians kept their faith to Childebert *Adoptivus*.[265]

While Austrasian power – Pippinid power – in the *Regnum Francorum* increased, the significance of Merovingian kingship in Austrasia waned. To be sure, Merovingian legitimacy was officially respected. At the same time, Merovingian kings no longer resided in or even visited Austrasia. Writing in Neustria in 727, the author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* conveys to his readers the love and awe he feels for his king Childebert III.[266] Sixty years later, the author of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, writing under the patronage of king Pippin's uncle, conveys the irrelevance of the later Merovingians by altogether omitting them from his report. Again twenty years later, the Merovingians are almost foreign kings to the author of the *Annales Mettenses Priores.* They govern "that kingdom", *Niwistria*.[267] The development is, in a sense, paralleled in hagiography where we find, from the early VIIIth-century *Vita Boniti* to the mid VIIIth-century *Vita Hugberti*, a shift which leads from loyalty to Merovingians (Sigebert III) towards adulation for the Carolingians

265 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 108, 112 and 117.
266 *LHF*, c. 50.
267 *AMP*, 9.

(Carloman). The last stage, ridiculing the previous powers, was reached in Einhard's fictitious depicting of the Merovingian king's in their ox-drawn chariot.[268] By then, of course, Carolingian kingship had become the norm. At the same time it still felt uneasy, prompting their *damnatio memoriae* of the Merovingians.

268 *Einhardi vita Karoli Magni*, c. 1.

III. The construction of the sacred

Section 1. A paradigm of the sacred. The Christian context

Throughout the VIIth and VIIIth centuries the sacred became an increasingly important dimension for both the Austrasians' self-conception and Austrasian royal authority. In fact, Austrasian self-conception for a large part arose as a collateral to the conscious construction of what may be styled a paradigm of sacredness. In a similar way, Austrasian royal authority – whether wielded by a king or by a mayor – evolved in a continuous discourse with this construction process and increasingly began to express itself in terms and actions derived from the sacred sphere. The grammar of kingship became more and more intertwined with the terms of the sacred. This development is most clearly visible – and reaches its completion – under the Carolingians. As an illustration may serve the following passage from the letter of Louis the Pious to abbot Hilduin of Saint-Denis (c. 835), in which the emperor refers to his fall and subsequent restoration (833/834) in the following words: "We also have experienced the favors of Saint Denis, through many and regular gifts, specifically when we were punished by God's rod of instruction – events apparently resulting from human inconstancy we have to understand as His just judgement – and, next, were raised up before the altar (of Saint Denis) by the staff of His mild compassion, through the merit and support of our most glorious lord and reverend father Saint Denis. By divine power we were reerected and, authorised by the bishops, we girded ourselves once more with the sword-belt and we have been supported by the gracious help (of Dionysius) up to this time".[1] The sentiment expressed here had its roots firmly within the reign of the VIIth-century Austrasian Merovingians.

1 MGH, *Epistolae*, 5:325-27, no 19. *Sed et nos multis ac frequentibus largitionibus beneficia eius* [=*Dionisii*] *sumus experti, praecipue tamen in humanae varietatis eventu, quo Dei ut semper fatendum est iuste iudicio in virga eruditionis suae visitati et baculo speciosae misericordiae eius ante prescriptum altare per merita et solatium domni ac piissimi partis nostri pretiosi Dionisii virtute divina reerecti et restituti sumus cingulumque militare iudicio atque auctoritate episcopali resumpsimus, et usque ad praesens ipsius gratioso adiutorio sustentamur.* See on this topic: M. de Jong, 'The Penitential State. Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840' (Cambridge 2009).

The construction of a paradigm of sacredness in Austrasia developed along several strands. A first strand was constituted by the construction of a missionary identity for Austrasia. This process can be inferred from hagiographic sources (remarkably enough, not from historiographical sources). Section two of this chapter argues that VIIIth-century hagiographers, working within the Austrasian sphere, consciously represented missionary work as a proper vocation for a saint, at the same time retrospectively and gratuitously attributing missionary ambitions to some VIIth-century saints and leaders. The discourse on this aspect has gained a new impulse from Wood's work on early medieval missionary history.[2] A second strand of the paradigm of sacredness was formed by hagiographical legend construction: in composing, expanding and recycling saints' lives, whether or not on the basis of actual biographies, sainthood and sanctity acquired significance in defining the Austrasian polity and kingship – and thus identity. Section three of this chapter analyzes genesis, character and effects of this legend construction, starting with a brief discussion of some of the views included in the work of František Graus on rulers and saints in the Merovingian kingdom.[3] Finally, a third strand is formed by the gradual emerging of a sacred topography throughout the Austrasian heartlands, result of – among other things – the Austrasian "Klosterpolitik" already touched upon in the previous chapter. Section four of this chapter presents a perspective on the ideological significance of the new ecclesiastical map for Austrasian identity and kingship.

Lapses and lacunae in Austrasian Christianity

The three strands presented – the construction of a missionary identity, hagiographic legend construction and the emerging of a sacred topography – contribute to the development of an Austrasian identity. At the same time, they reflect the essentially Christian context which, in the *Regnum Francorum* of the VIIth and VIIIth centuries, determined character and direction of developments. Hen has, on the whole convincingly, demonstrated that Merovingian Gaul was a Christianized society, at least a society permeated by a strong Christian influence.[4] His picture of a vigorous Gallican Church is specifically valid for Neustria and Burgundy. In my view a subtle nuance is in order for Austrasia. Certainly enough Austrasia was a Christian commonwealth in the VIIth and VIIIth century. Yet ecclesiastical affairs in the Northeastern kingdom were not as smoothly arranged as they were further west or south. Even

2 Wood, *The missionary life*. Specifically see chapter 7, Salzburg and Freising in the eighth century.

3 Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger*.

4 Y. Hen, *Culture and religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751* (Leiden, New York and Cologne 1995), *passim*.

in the very heartland of the Pippinids there is the striking discontinuity in the history of the bishopric of Tongres-Maastricht-Liège. This is not the place to expand on the problems associated with trying to identify Vth- and VIth-century bishops succeeding Servatius, who himself remains a very shadowy figure.[5] Yet the lacunary tradition,[6] the difficulties concerning evidence and references on (alleged) bishops like Monulphus[7] and Bettulfus,[8] and especially the fact that in the VIIth century two consecutive bishops were murdered – Theodardus[9] and Lambertus[10] – suggest a troubled state of the bishopric. Add to this the problems that forced Amandus to relinquish the see of Maastricht – which pope Martin I, in a letter to Amandus, ascribed to priests and deacons having fallen *in lapsum*[11] – and the conclusion urges itself on us that the VIIth- and early VIIIth-century Maastricht church was in disarray. There are signs that relapses of faith had occurred also elsewhere in Austrasia. It is Amandus again whom we see making an effort to regain lost ground for the church in the lower Scheldt region, where the people had become apostates – *relicto deo*[12] – and vehemently resisted the saints' efforts to lead them back into the fold of the church. And we have the report of Amatus, the founder of Remiremont monastery, whom, in his younger years, the brothers of Luxeuil sent to Austrasia to preach there, presumably with good reasons.[13] The episodes suggest a certain aspect of rusticity about ecclesiastical affairs in Austrasia, which may well have been linked to an even more rustic condition beyond the Rhine.[14] At the lower reaches of that river, at Utrecht, Dagobert I had a church built which he donated to bishop Chunibert of Cologne, but for the time being Christianity

5 Gregory of Tours, *Gloria confessorum*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 1.2 (Hanover 1885) 294-370, c. 71 (Servatius is named "Aravatius" here). See the article 'Servatius, Bischof von Tongern' in *Biografisch-Biliographisch Kirchenlexikon*, Band XVII (2000), Spalte 1290, author Karl Mühlek.

6 C.A.A. Linssen, *Historische opstellen over Lotharingen en Maastricht in de Middeleeuwen* (Assen and Maastricht 1985), 82-138. Also: P.C. Boeren, 'Les Evêques de Tongres-Maestricht', *Revue de l'histoire de l'Eglise de France* 62 (1976) 25-36.

7 Gregory of Tours, *Gloria confessorum*, c. 71.

8 *Concilium Parisiense* (614) 192, line 21.

9 *Herigeri et Anselmi gesta episcoporum Tungrensium Traiectensium et Leodensium edente*, ed. R. Roepke, MGH SS 7 (Hanover 1846) 134-234, II c. 27-28. Linssen, *Historische opstellen*, 88-89.

10 *Vita Landiberti Vetustissima*, c. 13-16.

11 *Vita Amandi II*, II : *Epistola Martini Papae*.

12 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 13.

13 *Vita Amati*, c. 6: *"… directus a fratribus, ut quasdam urbes Austrasiorum lustraret; multa enim gratia predicationis in illo vigebat"*.

14 Also in the North of Neustria reconstruction work was needed. See Mériaux, 'Thérouanne' and idem, *Gallia irradiata. Saints et sanctuaires dans le Nord de la Gaule* (Stuttgart 2006).

came off worse in this Frisian region and the building fell into ruin.[15] Like most Frisians, the Saxons were and remained for a long time pagan. Other *gentes* beyond the Rhine, however, had been Christianized – to different degrees. Wood constructs a plausible case for the Thuringians having been (partly) Christianized as early as the VIth century[16] and it is besides likely "that Bavaria was substantially Christianized by the eighth century" and that Bavarian Christianity in many parts had Roman roots.[17] In addition Wood points out the possibility that the "Church east of the upper and middle Rhine was established not by Anglo-Saxons, or indeed by Irishmen, but rather by the Franks themselves,"[18] which would mean that this process had been going on (at least) from the VIIth century onwards. Notwithstanding this, pagan influences remained present in Germany, even if an episode like Boniface's felling of the oak at Geismar, or a text like the *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum,*[19] do not imply a persistently heathen society but rather show us, to use an apt phrase of Wood, "the normal, as opposed to ideal, state of Christianity, intermixed with some pockets of paganism".[20] It is clear that there existed a Christian substrate beyond the middle and upper Rhine, which in time might – and would – attract royal and ecclesiastical commitment from Austrasia proper. It is understandable that such involvement was to go hand in hand with reformist efforts to achieve more conformity in the varied spiritual and ecclesiastical sampling in the East, if only to screen the Church in the West against improper influences. And then, of course, there was the Austrasian desire to establish or reestablish authority beyond the Rhine.

Outside influences

All in all, the essential context within which Austrasian Christian identity developed was a less solid and/or stable one than the Gallican

15 Bonifatius, *Epistolae*, ed. M. Tangl, MGH Epistolae Epp.Sel. I (Berlin 1916) 109 and W.S. van Egmond, 'Utrechts oudste kerk en Dagobert. Vraagtekens bij een brief van Bonifatius', *Millennium. Tijdschrift voor middeleeuwse studies* 24 (2010) 95-112; see also Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 318, and for a broader context J. Bazelmans, 'The early-medieval use of ethnic names from classical Antiquity. The case of the Frisians' in: T. Derks and N. Roymans ed., *Ethnic constructs in Antiquity. The role of power and tradition* (Amsterdam 2009) 321-338.

16 Wood, *The missionary life*, 9.

17 Wood, *The missionary life*, 11.

18 Ibidem.

19 *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*, ed. A. Dierkens, 'Superstitions, Christianisme et paganisme à la fin de l'epoque mérovingienne' in: H. Hasquin ed., *Magie, sorcellerie, parapsychologie* (Brussels 1984) 9-26.

20 Wood, *The missionary life*, 65. For a splendid overview of the pagan past surviving into the middle ages, see: L.J.R. Milis ed., *The pagan Middle Ages* (Woodbridge 1998). Also: R. Künzel, 'Paganisme, syncrétisme et culture religieuse populaire au haut Moyen Âge. Réflexions de méthode', *Annales ESC* 47 (1992) 1055-1069.

Christian context as depicted by Hen for Neustria and Burgundy. At the same time, this led to Austrasia being more susceptible to Christian influences from outside, notably from Ireland and from Anglo-Saxon Christianity – and more attractive to zealous churchmen from these regions. In any case such influences permeated the region from the late VIth century onward, starting with Columbanus and continuing into the time of Alcuin in the days of Charlemagne. Some of the characteristics of the Irish tradition – a dynamic monastic tradition, the concept of *peregrinatio*, perceptions of penance – were to influence ecclesiastical developments in Austrasia profoundly. The Anglo-Saxon connection brought Austrasian Christianity, among many other things, a stronger link with Rome. Also, the sanctification of three VIIth-century kings of Northumbria – Edwin, Oswald and Oswin[21] – may have influenced later Austrasian or Carolingian concepts of kingship and the sacred. The *topos* of the "martyr-king", to a large degree inspired by the *martyrium* of king Sigismund and the subsequent tradition of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune, appears to apply to the three Northumbrian kings as well as, in a lesser degree, to Sigebert III and Dagobert II.[22]

Austrasia was exposed to Christian influences from outside the Gallican sphere, if only because of the succession of Irish and British clerics – or clerics who had gained considerable inspiration from insular spirituality – welcomed in Austrasia and/or at the Austrasian court. Columbanus arrived about 590 at the court of Childebert II.[23] Foilan and Ultan, brothers of Furseus, were involved with the origins of the monasteries of Nivelles and Fosses, in the 640's. Amandus, an Aquitanian, had by then already become an Irish-style bishop, operating in the Northern frontier region of the Franks. Remaclus, another Aquitanian who had undergone Irish influence, came to Sigebert III's court in the 640's. With support of the king he founded the monasteries Cugnon and Stavelot-Malmédy. Two generations after Ultan was abbot at Fosses, Anglo-Saxon missionaries began to arrive. Willibrord, the two Hewalds, Winfried/Boniface, Leoba, Lebuin, Willibald and others put their indelible mark on Austrasia. The Frankish upper aristocracy, from 740 onward, is linked, as through a nexus, with Anglo-Saxon clergymen and a new Roman papacy. Up to that time, the often prevailing Greek-

21 *Historia Ecclesiastica* II, c. 17 (Edwin; see also Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 81-82), III, c. 6 (Oswald) and c. 14 (Oswin).

22 Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger*, 428-431. Graus' sees the martyr-king as one of the three categories of kings who could achieve sainthood. His three categories are: 1) the monk-king; 2) the king fallen in battle; 3) the murdered or betrayed king (der ermordete und verratene König).

23 On the context of Jonas giving the wrong name (Sigebert) for the king, see: I.N. Wood, 'Jonas, the Merovingians and Pope Honorius. Diplomata and the Vita Columbani' in: A.C. Murray ed., *After Rome's fall. Narrators and sources of early medieval history. Essays presented to Walter Goffart* (Toronto 1998) 99-120.

Byzantine influence on the papacy had hampered the connection between Rome and the Franks.[24]

Section 2. The construction of a missionary identity

King Dagobert I donated Utrecht to bishop Chunibert of Cologne.[25] The act has often been seen as a first step towards converting the Frisians.[26] There is no real proof for that view. The fact that a church was (re) founded at Utrecht or that Chunibert was a bishop does not automatically imply that Dagobert intended Utrecht to become an operating base for conversion. The assertion that Chunibert had received the gift in exchange for an obligation to missionarize among the Frisians stems from Boniface.[27] We can be certain of one thing only: that Utrecht was considered a strategic outpost in a disputed frontier area. The *Gesta Dagoberti I* make no mention of the donation by Dagobert, whereas its author usually doesn't miss an opportunity to highlight the king's piety. It seems, then, that the transfer of Utrecht had, in the eyes of this hagiographer, no missionary significance to speak of or was even unknown to him. For that matter, no report on the transfer survives apart from the reference in the letter of Boniface.

VIIth-century Austrasia: no proof for missionary zeal

Some years after Dagobert made his donation to Chunibert, another bishop, Amandus, was active in the Scheldt region.[28] Amandus was a bishop of a type quite different from Chunibert. At the time, he had no fixed see. He worked with marginal groups on the fringe of the kingdom. He had overseas – *i.e.* Irish – connections. These elements may have greatly contributed to our view of Amandus as a missionary – a view

24 A.J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern influences on Rome and the papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590-752* (Lanham/Plymouth 2007). For developments within the late-Merovingian and early-Carolingian church in Austrasia, see: M.A. Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church. Chrodegang of Metz and the Regula canonicorum in the eighth century* (Cambridge 2004).

25 Bonifatius, *Epistolae*, 109; see Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 318.

26 See, for instance: C.J.C. Broer and M.W.J. de Bruijn, 'Bonifatius en de Utrechtse kerk' in: E.S.C. Erkelens-Buttinger ed., *De kerk en de Nederlanden. Archieven, instellingen, samenleving* (Hilversum 1997) 43-66.

27 Van Egmond, 'Utrechts oudste kerk', 95-112. As to his doubts on which Dagobert had donated Utrecht: these are not very convincingly presented. Dagobert I still remains the most probable benefactor.

28 Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon, 'Amandus, Apostel der Belgier', author Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, Band I, 1999, Spalten 139-140.

which was in any case taken up enthusiastically by the VIIIth-century constructors of his legend. Yet was Amandus a missionary? True, the *Vita Amandi I* mentions his alleged missionary activities among the Slavs[29] and the Basques,[30] but both episodes appear rather out of character and unconnected with the rest of Amandus' biography as presented in the *Vita*, and we lack corroborative evidence. Also, the commission given Amandus by Saint Peter concerns "preaching in Gaul",[31] which is not the same as converting the *gentes*. His work in the *pagus* of Ghent appears to have been not so much among downright pagans as with people who have neglected the true faith, possibly relapsed Christians.[32] In this context a testimony of Jonas of Bobbio on Amandus' work in the Scheldt region also speaks of "combating ancient errors" rather than of converting pagans – and Jonas' mention of a metaphorical "sword of the gospel" (*euangelico mucrone*)[33] is not a reference to armed support for missionary work but rather to the sword-like power of the Divine teachings. In line with this we should also weigh the report, in the *Vita Amandi I*, on Amandus' supposed request for royal support for his work near Ghent.[34] Rather than the king sending troops to assist on a missionary frontier we have here a case of government support for ecclesiastical reconstruction and reform. There had been priests there once, but they had departed.[35]

Thus, though missionary significance has been ascribed to Dagobert I's Utrecht donation and to the work of Amandus, these episodes provide no proof of the existence of a missionary zeal, in the sense of (Christian) "mission to the pagan ... as envisaged at the end of Matthew's gospel" (Wood's definition).[36] In fact, the narratives of Fredegar and of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* show no evidence of such zeal. Indeed, taking a wider temporal perspective, there is no mention of any missionary ambition or activity in any of the historic narratives. Gregory of Tours has nothing to say on mission in his Histories. The other narratives, up to and including the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* and the *Annales Mettenses Priores* are equally silent on the topic, whereas we know that the latter two works were composed at the time of greatest missionary activity on the North-Eastern frontier.

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29 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 16.

30 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 20.

31 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 7; *… ut in Galliis ad praedicationem exercendam reverti deberet …*

32 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 13; *… relicto Deo …*

33 *Vita Columbani*, prologue.

34 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 13. *...ut si quis se non sponte per baptismi lavacrum regenerare voluisset, coacto a rege sacro ablueretur baptismate. Quod ita factum est.*

35 *Vita Amandi I,* c. 13. *... omnes sacerdotes a praedicatione loci illius se subtraxerant, ...*

36 Wood, *The missionary life*, 3. Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you".

Restoring lapses of faith

Frankish evangelizing in the VIIth century appears to have been aimed at restoring internal lapses of faith rather than converting external *gentes* to Christianity. Thus, we see Arnulf of Metz relinquishing life at court to devote himself to pious works in the Vosges,[37] Romaric undertaking a journey to inspect monasteries[38] and Amatus being delegated from Luxeuil to certain *urbes Austrasiorum* to preach.[39]

In fact, we have good reason to put into question the truthfulness of the VIIth- and VIIIth-century sources, mainly hagiographic, which ascribe a missionary ambition or programme to men like Amandus, Eustasius and others who, because of these narratives, have ever since been considered missionaries striving to convert the pagan *gentes*. An alleged missionary effort undertaken from Luxeuil by Eustasius and Agrestius in the 630's appears rather to have been concerned with opposing heresy.[40] During the VIIth century Austrasians nor Franks nor Burgundians appear to have really cared about mission.

A series of VIIIth-century hagiographic texts from Austrasia and Bavaria retrospectively ascribe missionary ambitions and undertakings to men with Austrasian or Frankish backgrounds who probably hardly worked at converting heathens. These texts belong to the hagiography on Amandus, Emmeram, Corbinian and Rupert and they seem to obey a programme of legend construction which partly responds to actual Anglo-Saxon missionary work undertaken shortly before or at the time of their writing. In Austrasian or Frankish historiography or legislation, other than in hagiography, missionary references do not occur until well into the IXth century. In short, there is something like a mystification around narratives of VIIth- and early VIIIth-century missionaries and for this study it is relevant to at least bring the resulting ambiguity to light and – if possible – say something about its significance.

To begin with, there are the cases of Eustasius and Agrestius as reported to us by Jonas. Eustasius, third abbot of Luxeuil, is reported by Jonas to have preached with the Warascs (the Varais, in Franche-Comté[41]) and the Bavarians.[42] In my view, this does not make him a missionary. It appears, rather, that Eustasius' effort was mainly directed at leading relapsed Christians back to the fold of the church and at combating heresy. We read about Warascs who are given to the "errors" of Photinus

37 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 20 and 21.
38 *Vita Romarici*, c. 8.
39 *Vita Amati*, c. 6.
40 *Vita Columbani*, II, c. 8 and 9.
41 See on the Warascs the remarks of Krusch (*Vita Columbani*, introduction Krusch 121, note 6).
42 *Vita Columbani*, II, c. 8.

and Bonosus,[43] and about Bavarians who must be corrected through the characteristics of faith – with inevitably some *topos*-like words on conversion.[44] And although Jonas states of Agrestius that he went to the Bavarians with the ambition to become a *gentium praedicator,*[45] actual preaching is not reported and we rather hear about his stay at Aquileia, the centre of the Tricapitoline heresy.[46]

Amandus

As said before, we cannot prove Amandus to have been a missionary. He was a *peregrinus* and a *sapiens*, linked to the Irish tradition. In that same tradition, he was also a bishop (which Columbanus was not). In the *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis* Amandus is presented in a pastoral and in some respects scholarly capacity. He is active in a Christian environment. He assists with the founding of Nivelles monastery, essentially providing, through his counsel and his network, the blueprint for a monastic foundation – a blueprint providing for overseas contacts and for a Roman connection. Through Amandus' intercession Itta could send messengers who acquired holy books from Rome, as well as from overseas men learned in the formulas of divine law.[47] It fitted this pattern that Itta offered asylum to the Irishman Foilan after he was exiled from Neustria; she aided him with founding a monastery at Fosses.[48] What we have here is an example of the purposive "Klosterpolitik" discussed in chapter two, not an example of missionary dynamics. Yet Amandus is represented, in his legend as it was constructed during the VIIIth century, as the figurehead and role model of missionary activity. Two out

43 The IVth-century bishop Photinus of Sirmium denied the divine nature of Christ (see: T. Böhm, 'Photin von Sirmium' in: Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (RGG), 4. Auflage, Band 6, Tübingen 2003). Bonosus (IVth century) allegedly shared his views. According to Knut Schäferdiek (Brill Online Reference Works), a sectarian church of the Bonosiacs or Bonosians is attested from the middle of the 5th to the first third of the 7th century in Burgundy and in the second third of the 6th century also in the Balkans in Upper Dacia. They are considered to be Photinians (Photinus of Sirmium) and are supposed to have used the predicate "son of God" only in reference to the human Jesus and to have understood it in the sense of adoption. They re-baptized converts. The founder may have been bishop Bonosus of Naissus. Schäferdiek, Knut. "Bonosus and Bonosians", *Religion Past and Present*. Brill Online, 2014. Reference. http://www.encquran.brill.nl/entries/religion-past-and-present/bonosus-and-bonosians-SIM_02238.

44 *Vita Columbani*, II, c. 8; *…Warasquos praedicat, quorum alii idolatriis cultibus dediti, alii Fotini et Bonosi errore maculati eant. … Boias, qui nunc Baioarii vocantur … multo labore inbutos fideique lineamento correctos, plurimos eorum ad fidem convertit.*

45 *Vita Columbani*, II, c. 9.

46 On the Tricapitoline heresy see: K. Greschat, 'Gregory I's Christology and the three chapters controversy' in: Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association (2012) vol. 8 53-76.

47 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 2. The overseas connections of the Nivelles monastery obviously remained important for some time, witness the sea voyage which some monks, including the author of the *Vita*, at one time made on the monastery's business (*Vita Geretrudis*, c. 5).

48 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano.*

of the four VIIIth-century *Vitae* we have of Amandus, claim missionary achievements for their protagonist: the *Vita Antiqua*[49] and the *Vita Prima.*[50] The other two – the *Vita Brevis*[51] and the *Vita Secunda*[52] – do not, for quite different reasons.[53]

The *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, which probably dates from between 755 and 768[54] and of which an early – or the earliest – manuscript may have belonged to bishop Arno of Salzburg, reports alleged missionary undertakings of Amandus, including his intention to travel to England.[55] It was a template for the *Vita Amandi Prima* (written after 782), which latter Life included a fictitious, topical reference to forceful baptism (but left out the reference to mission among the Anglo-Saxons).[56] In both Lives, the references to missionary work, uncorroborated from other sources, must be considered elements of VIIIth-century legend construction added to the biography of a saint who was authentically, a *peregrinus pro Christo* rather than a missionary to the *gentes*.[57] Other than Wood – following Wolfgang Fritze – states, Amandus did not bring together ideas of Columbanus on *peregrinatio* and of Gregory the Great on evangelisation.[58] At most, his legend constructors in the VIIIth century did. Amandus was a VIIth-century *peregrinus*, the missionary elements

49 Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima'; in her presentation Anne-Marie Helvétius drew attention to the passage in the *Vita Antiqua* on Amandus' alleged intention to go and preach to the Anglo-Saxons, omitted from the *Vita Prima* and possibly meant ironically.

50 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 16 and 20.

51 M. Diesenberger, 'Rewriting the Vita Amandi in a Bavarian sermon collection of the 9th century', IMC paper presentation (510b) 2007; other than Diesenberger, I feel that the missionary episodes, rather than having been consciously left out of the *brevis*, may just not have been part of the perspective of the *brevis'* author.

52 The *Vita Amandi II*, by Milo, emphasises Amandus' pastoral, theological and administrative activities, as well as his connection, as bishop of Maastricht, with Rome.

53 The *Vita Secunda* which – other than Wood states (Wood, *The missionary life*, c. 42) – is not an expanded version of the Vita Prima but an independent text composed in Elno dating from c. 850, has nothing to say on missionary work. In this sense it may be close to the authentic Amandus (Mériaux, 'A hagiographer at work'). The *Vita Brevis* leaves out missionary references because it is an abbreviation (Diesenberger, 'Rewriting the Vita Amandi').

54 Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima' and Wood, *The Missionary Life*. See also Riedmann, 'Unbekannte frühkarolingische Handschriftfragmente' and A. Verhulst and G. Declercq, 'L'action et le souvenir de saint Amand en Europe centrale. À propos de la découverte d' une Vita Amandi antiqua' in: M. van Uytfanghe and R. Demeulenaere ed., *Aevum inter Utrumque. Mélanges offerts à Gabriel Sanders* (Den Haag 1991) 503-526.

55 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 14. *...mare Britannicum transire voluit ad gentes Saxonum, ut eis Evangelium praedicaret, ...*

56 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 13.

57 The *Vita Amandi Antiqua* adds to its report on Amandus' intention to travel as a missionary to Britain his desire to be a *peregrinus*: *... in peregrinatione cunctis diebus vitae suae permanere volebat.* (14).

58 Wood, *The missionary life*, 39 and W. Fritze, 'Universalis gentium confessio. Formeln, Träger und Wege universalmissionarischen Denkens im 7. Jahrhundert', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 3 (1969) 78-130.

in his legend are VIIIth-century additions. However, Wood's conjecture that the *Vita Antiqua* influenced Arbeo of Freising's *Passio Haimhrammi* and *Vita Corbiniani*, as well as the *Passio Kiliani*, is plausible.[59] In fact, the two *Vitae Amandi* which emphasize missionary elements can very well be interpreted in a common context with (semi-) contemporary Bavarian Lives which, as it turns out, also embellish their protagonists' biographies with missionary fiction – or, if one prefers, a missionary *topos*.

Rupert, Emmeram, Corbinian

A case in point is the development of the legend of Rupert of Salzburg (d. after 712).[60] Although his earliest Life, dating from c. 746 (but lost),[61] and the *Gesta Hrodberti,*[62] dating from c. 793, which was based on the earlier Life, represent him as a reformer of the Bavarian church, a later version which may be deduced from the *Breves Notitiae* (c. 798-800), represents him "as a saint active in a pagan area".[63] We have good reasons to think that political reasons rather than missionary ambitions led Rupert to leave Austrasian Worms for Bavarian Salzburg – he belonged to the Austrasian aristocratic opposition and came into conflict with the Pippinids[64] – and we also may presume that the way he is represented in the Bavarian sources to a degree reflects resistance against the meddlesomeness of Boniface.[65] The relevant point here, however, is that – as happened to the legend of Amandus – the VIIIth-century representation of Rupert tended to increasingly credit him with missionary work and intentions which were, in essence, anachronistic.

There are other cases. In the Life of Emmeram,[66] written c. 770 by bishop Arbeo of Freising, the protagonist is said to have left his native Poitiers in order to go and convert the Avars.[67] However, the duke of Bavaria ordered him to stay in Regensburg, because the inhabitants' relatively new Christianity could do with some refinement[68] – rather an effrontery to a city which had been Christian since Roman times. In the end, Emmeram

59 Wood, *The missionary life*, 42, specifically note 141. Also the traditions concerning Saint Pirmin fit within this context; see A. Angenendt, *Monachi Peregrini. Studien zu Pirmin und den monastischen Vorstellungen des frühen Mittelalters* (Munich 1972).

60 Wood, *The missionary life*, 146-150.

61 Ibidem.

62 *Gesta Hrodberti*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM 6 (Hanover and Leipzig 1913) 140-162.

63 Wood, *The missionary life*, 149.

64 This is worked out in chapter four.

65 Wood, *The missionary life*, specifically chapter seven.

66 *Vita vel passio Haimhrammi episcopi et martyris Ratisbonensis*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover and Leipzig 1902) 452-524.

67 *Vita vel passio Haimhrammi episcopi et martyris Ratisbonensis*, c. 3: *… ut illuc Christum praedicare deberetur*. 4: *Sacer Dei famulus se in hoc exisse a Gallorum regno, ut gentes Hunorum, quae ignorant Deum caeli … convertere debuisset.*

68 *Vita vel passio Haimhrammi episcopi et martyris Ratisbonensis*, c. 7: *Sed habitatores eius neoffiti eo namque in tempore idolatram radicitus ex se non extirpaverunt …*

got into trouble. Not long after 700 he was cruelly murdered for reasons which have become buried under myth. There may have been many reasons for a clerical gentleman from VIIth-century Aquitaine to travel to Regensburg – but missionary ambition is certainly not the most probable of these and, in fact, in Arbeo's account Emmeram never got to the Avars. We may suspect that Arbeo ascribed missionary intentions to Emmeram which the saint never harboured. Whatever his reason was for doing this, Arbeo may have been influenced by the missionary content in the *Vita Amandi* (or an earlier and possibly lost version of it). At any rate, here too missionary ambitions are imputed on a saint who may never have nursed them.[69]

Also, there is Arbeo's *Vita Corbiniani*.[70] Corbinian (c. 670-730) is considered the first bishop of Bavarian Freising. This does not make him a missionary. In fact, Arbeo's account is in essence the story of a hermit – allegedly from Melun – who preaches to those who come and visit him,[71] who is forced by the duke Grimoald of Bavaria to join his court[72] and in the end seeks solace at a monastery near Meran.[73] Of the inhabitants of the Eastern Alps, whom Corbinian allegedly met on his journeys to Rome, it is said that they had already been converted (if not very long before) and that his preaching, rather than establishing their faith, only helped "increase" it (*augmentum fidei*).[74] Arbeo's Life of him nevertheless shows signs of "missionary colouring", notably in Corbinian's two alleged journeys to Rome,[75] at which occasions the pope is said to have sent him back to Gaul (not to *gentes*) with a commission. At Corbinian's first stay in Rome, the pope tells him to *ubique praedicationis officium exercere per universum orbem*.[76] It is the only expression suggestive of a missionary mandate in the whole *Vita* and one may well suspect that Arbeo inserted the Roman episodes to provide the biography of the very sedentary Corbinian with the desired missionary flavour. The two journeys echo the two Roman journeys of Amandus' *Vitae antiqua* and *secunda*. They may have been introduced into the Life to prop up the saint's charisma against the claims of Boniface.[77] Possibly Corbinian never visited Rome. Arbeo's

69 Wood, *The missionary life*, 58-65.
70 *Vita Corbiniani episcopi Baiuvariam*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM 6 (Hanover and Leipzig 1913) 497-499.
71 *Vita Corbiniani episcopi Baiuvariam*, c. 14.
72 *Vita Corbiniani episcopi Baiuvariam*, c. 20.
73 *Vita Corbiniani episcopi Baiuvariam*, c. 30.
74 *Vita Corbiniani episcopi Baiuvariam*, c. 15.
75 *Vita Corbiniani episcopi Baiuvariam*, c. 7-9 and 20.
76 *Vita Corbiniani*, c. 9.
77 Wood, *The missionary life*; see also Krusch's note 11 to caput 7 and note 9 to caput 8 of the *Vita Corbiniani*.

accounts of the journeys are hardly convincing.[78] The passages, however, do enhance the Life of Corbinian with the kind of *ex post* missionary colouring which we also find in the Lives of Amandus, Rupert and Emmeram. To this series may be added the *Passio Kiliani,*[79] "almost an amalgamation of the *Lives* of Emmeram and Corbinian".[80]

Retrospective projection of missionary zeal into the VIIth century
What we learn from the above is, that in the later VIIIth century at least two of the Lives of Amandus and also Arbeo's Lives of Emmeram and Corbinian, as well as the narratives on Kilian and on Rupert, ascribe to their protagonists a missionary mandate, ambition or undertaking, to a varying degree. We should realize that these have neither corroboration in other / earlier texts nor that they are relevant to the actual biographies of the men concerned. It is clear that the Lives of Amandus are most outspoken on this missionary aspect – so much so that Amandus' image soon evolved into that of the quintessential non-Anglo-Saxon missionary saint.
Amandus had become, through his contacts with Itta, Grimoald and Sigebert III, a very familiar figure among Austrasian aristocrats. Therefore it is relevant, when studying the development of Austrasian identity, to try and analyze how the changing perceptions of Amandus may relate to this development. This perception of Amandus, which ultimately depicted a missionary with activities allegedly ranging all over Europe, from the Basques to the Slavs, did hardly reflect the authentic bishop-peregrine of whom contemporaries attest a mainly pastoral and monastic attitude. In fact, VIIth- and VIIIth-century source material on Amandus shows two distinct approaches. Jonas (in his introduction to the *Vita Columbani*), the *Vita Geretrudis* and Milo in his *Vita Secunda* all present an Amandus whose interests and activities are focussed on furthering monasticism and remedying apostasy in Western Austrasia. In the same vein we have the *Vita Bavonis*[81] (VIIIth/IXth century, like the other texts just mentioned originating from the Scheldt and Meuse area), which represents Amandus as a bishop[82] in the Ghent region, where he *ad sanctam christianitatem omnes revocavit* and founded churches and monasteries.[83] Of Bavo it is told that he spent his days piously in a monk's cell at Ghent,[84] which

78 The accounts are wrought with miracles and read altogether like a pack of topoi. Besides, as Krusch points out (note 11 to caput 7), there is a serious chronological inconsistency in the Vita's account of the first journey.
79 *Passio Kiliani*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 711-728.
80 Wood, *The missionary life*, 161.
81 *Vita Bavonis*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover and Leipzig 1902) 527-546.
82 *Vita Bavonis*, c. 3, *pontifex*.
83 *Vita Bavonis*, c. 4; here we also find an explicit mention of *laus perennis* at Ghent: … *clericorum coenobium … ubi die noctuque laus a fidelibus Deo decantatur.*
84 *Vita Bavonis*, c. 6 and 7.

seems hardly compatible with the missionary fame linked to his memory. True, there is a reference to destroying pagan shrines[85] and one sentence explicitly referring to Amandus and Bavo undertaking a missionary journey together,[86] but these are echo's from the *Vita Amandi Prima* and very much in contradiction with the very local, almost smug, tone of Bavo's Life as a whole. Interestingly, the Life is silent on baptisms allegedly forced by royal pressure as they are mentioned in the *Vita Amandi*. All in all, these texts differ greatly from the representation of Amandus, discussed above, as given in the *Vita Antiqua* and the *Vita Prima*. Austrasians, then, appear not to have cared about mission – at least not until it was brought home to them (literally, by men like Wilfrid and Willibrord) what the potential of missionary work was. As Wood has pointed out, Alcuin, in his *Vita Willibrordi* (before 797) and in his revision of the *Vita Richarii*, explicitly wrote about the importance of preaching the gospel and put its significance above miracles. Preaching, in its function of teaching and in its significance for pastoral care, does not automatically imply mission among the heathen. Indeed, as Wood makes clear, Alcuin doubted the spiritual value of conversion if it was not preceded by understanding.[87] But, following the collapse of the Avar Empire in 796, "a completely new mission field ... opened up. The possibilities were discussed at a synod held on the Danube".[88] The bishops gathered quoted the gospel of John: "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be ... one shepherd".[89] Such an explicit intention, formulated at a time when already much effort had been spent on converting the Saxons, indicates a change of attitude which may well be reflected in the emphasis which Alcuin puts on preaching.[90] In his narrative on Willibrord, in his revision of Eucharius' Life, Alcuin in his turn constructs the legend in such a way as to enhance the missionary orientation and effort. Mission emerged as royal core business – and it did so in the East of the *Regnum Francorum*, because there confrontation with the pagan *gentes* was a regular occurrence. It did so towards 800 – not in the VIIth century. Its emergence was, however, prepared by and reflected in hagiographic

85 *Vita Bavonis*, c. 4. On early medieval religious complexities, see: Künzel, 'Paganisme'.

86 *Vita Bavonis*, c. 5; *Deinde vir Domini Amandus perrexit gentibus verbum Domini praedicare; quem beatus Bavo prosequutus est, ut pradedicatione eius pasceretur.* As regards content, there is no follow-up to this sentence in the rest of the *Vita*.

87 Wood, *The missionary life*, 80-90. On Alcuin also: M.B. de Jong, 'Alcuin and the formation of an intellectual élite' in: L.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald, *Alcuin of York. Scholar of the Carolingian court* (Groningen 1998) 45-57.

88 Wood, *The missionary life*, 85.

89 John 10:16, quoted in *Conventus episcoporum ad ripas Danubii*, MGH *LL* 3, p172. Translation: English standard version: *Et alias oves habeo, quae non sunt ex hoc ovili, et illas oportet me adducere et vocem meam audient et fiet unus pastor*.

90 Wood, *The missionary life*, 80-90.

legend construction throughout the (later) VIIIth century, which for this purpose focussed on Amandus and other saints working in areas of lapsed Christianity and retrospectively made them into missionaries. At the same time, the legend became part of the way Austrasians related to the sacred.

A problematical missionary identity

In the previous chapter the specific position of kingship within the Austrasian polity and its significance for the self-perception of Austrasians was dealt with. In the following chapter we discuss the way in which the political activism of Austrasian aristocrats contributed to Austrasian identity. The current chapter describes how hagiography in the VIIIth century (and later), through legend construction and the increasingly explicit adoption of a missionary orientation, instilled the dimension of the sacred into this identity. In the course of this process Austrasians retrospectively credited VIIth century saints and kings with missionary fervour and personal sanctity. In historiography this orientation emerges only later, e.g. in Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni*.[91]
The fact that the support of Willibrord for Charles Martel in the crucial struggle after 714 is only mentioned in hagiography (*Vita Landiberti ... Vetustissima*, c. 750) and not in the *Liber Historiae Francorum* or even, retrospectively, the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, indicates a blind spot which the writers of history may have had vis à vis missionary work.[92] There are other indications that Austrasians before c. 750 had not yet adopted a missionary orientation. VIIth-century Austrasian "Klosterpolitik" in the heartlands of Austrasia was not matched by a similar activity in the East (see section four).[93]
VIIIth-century hagiography, when attributing missionary zeal to its protagonists, often names visits to the pope as a starting point. The role thus attributed to the pope in many respects represents a *topos*. We cannot be certain that Amandus, or Emmeram or Corbinian, actually travelled to Rome or – if they did – that they met with the pope and received from him a missionary mandate. We are rather more certain that the Anglo-Saxon Wilfrid went to Rome and was received by the pope.[94]
It is plausible that the case of Wilfrid – who went to Rome twice – served

91 *Einhardi vita Karoli Magni*, c. 7: *"...Saxones, sicut omnes fere Germaniam incolentes nationes, et natura feroces et cultui daemonum dediti nostraeque religioni contrarii ... Suberant et causae, quae cotidie pacem conturbare poterant..."*.

92 R. A. Gerberding, '716. A crucial year for Charles Martel' in: J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter ed., *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen 1994) 205-216, 214; *Vita Landiberti Vetustissima*, 25.

93 E. Ewig, *Frühes Mittelalter*. Rheinische Geschichte 3 vols. (Düsseldorf 1980) 70-71; also K. van Vliet, *In kringen van kanunniken. Munsters en kapittels in het bisdom Utrecht 695-1227* (Zutphen 2002) 39.

94 *Vita Wilfridi* and *Acta Aunemundi, Acta Sanctorum,* Sep. 7 (Brussels 1760) 744-746.

as a template for later hagiography in providing the *topos* of travelling to Rome, often at least two times, and acquiring a papal mandate. We find such episodes in the Lives of, among others, Amandus, Emmeram and Corbinian. All the same, even being *topoi* only and possibly not in all cases reflecting actual episodes, these narratives make clear that Rome and Saint Peter gained influence in Austrasia. And, of course, Willibrord and Boniface actually travelled to the pope. That papal influence did not remain restricted to hagiography appears from the fact that, in the VIIIth century, it also entered the grammar of kingship, witness the effort to justify the change of dynasty in 751 through papal approval.

To conclude, then: Austrasia-based missionary work focussing on the frontier areas and the *gentes* beyond the frontier started rather later than often has been thought. Dagobert I's donation of Utrecht to the bishop of Cologne need not have been inspired by missionary ambition. Also, the work of Amandus on the Scheldt was probably aimed rather more at winning back lapsed and renegade Christians than at converting genuine pagans. The reference in Amandus' *Vita* to royal coercion – which by no means justifies the interpretation of conversion at sword's point – possibly constitutes an VIIIth-century addition to his legend, as is almost certainly the case with the accounts on his alleged missionary work among Basques and Slavs. VIIIth-century Austrasian hagiography accepted mission with retroactive effect into its paradigm. At the same time, the missionary perspective is completely lacking in contemporary historiography – which is problematic in the cases of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* and the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, works written in an Austrasian context at a time of fervent missionary activity. This is the more the case where we learn from Alcuin that towards 800 the missionary perspective had become linked up with Carolingian identity and kingship and the *communis opinio* was that this orientation dated back to the first half of the VIIth century. Although not true, this conviction remained part of Austrasian identity from the days of Charlemagne onward.

Section 3. Legend construction

Late antique and early medieval hagiography is a major vehicle for notions on the sacred. At the same time, this hagiography provides us with insights into the social context of its authors. We are indebted to Graus who, in his pioneering 1965 study "Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merovinger" presents a profound analysis of how early medieval hagiographical works may inform us on religious sentiment and

social mentalities.[95] Nowadays, of course, his work is outdated in several respects. This is especially true for his appreciation of the relation between hagiography on the one hand and the actual cult, popular or otherwise, of saints on the other. In emphasizing that only a genuinely palpable cult is decisive for the question whether or not there is a case of sainthood, Graus underestimates the potential as well as the fact that, frequently, hagiographic works are composed with the purpose to induce a cult.[96]
In the current section I will address two cases of legend construction. First I will discuss the Lives of Columbanus and of Amandus, and make plausible that the process and character of these constructions yield insights into Austrasian identity. Next, by discussing the doubtful titles to sainthood of some Austrasian kings, I intend to scrutinize the significance of these titles (if any) for our understanding of kingship in Austrasia. Inspiring views on the inner workings of the process of legend construction have recently been provided by Helvétius and Wood. Helvétius proposes that even the oldest of the Lives of Amandus, the *Vita Amandi Antiqua,*[97] does not reflect a VIIth-century reality, presenting as it does missionary aspects with an emphasis not compatible to actual missionary work in the VIIth century.[98] Wood's analysis of the *Vita Antiqua*'s significance corroborates this view; in addition, he provides other instances of conscious legend construction, all from Austrasia or from the Austrasian hinterland beyond the Rhine and in the East.[99] Legend construction through hagiography was neither confined to these areas nor to the VIIIth century. Jonas of Bobbio practized it in his *Vita Columbani*. His approach will be seen to have significance for the grammar of kingship in Austrasia.

3.1. Blessing, prophecy and peregrinatio – Jonas' construction of a perspective on Columbanus and its influence on Austrasian identity

Jonas of Bobbio wrote his *Vita Columbani* about 640-643. In this work, which influenced Fredegar and through him became known in Austrasia

95 Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger*.
96 Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger*. The present approach to hagiography and the cult of saints is well represented in A.-M. Helvétius, 'Hagiographie und Heiligenverehrung' in: A. Wieczorek, U. Koch and C. Braun ed., *Die Franken, Wegbereiter Europas. Vor 1500 Jahren König Chlodwig und seine Erben* (Mainz 1996) 401-406 and idem, Église et société au Moyen Âge, Ve-XVe siècle (Paris 2008).
97 *Sancti Amandi episcopi vita ab auctore anonymo*. J.-P. Migne ed., Patrologia Latina 87, cols 1267-1272; Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 41.
98 Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima'.
99 Wood, *The missionary life*; the analysis on the *Vita Amandi Antiqua* is on 40-41.

and in VIIIth century Carolingian circles,[100] Jonas introduces views which were to influence the grammar of kingship in the later VIIth and VIIIth centuries and reflect in hagiography, specifically in Austrasia. Jonas, writing almost thirty years after Columbanus' death, presents the saint as endowed with the power of blessing and the gift of prophecy, as well as invested with the dignity that comes with the status of a *peregrinus*. When looking closer into these specific traits – blessing, prophecy and *peregrinatio* –, we are, of course, aware of the connection almost traditionally laid between these traits and elements of Irish Christianity.[101] After all, the protagonist of Jonas' narrative, Columbanus, was an Irishman.[102] Within the context of this study, however, the emphasis will, rather than on possible Irish connections, lay on what the Italian Jonas, through his work on Columbanus, contributed to the emergence of an Austrasian identity.

Blessing

A key episode in the *Vita Columbani*'s account of the conflict between Columbanus and the Burgundian court of Theuderic II and Brunhild is the saint's refusal to bless Theuderic's sons. The saint not only refuses his blessing, but adds a prophecy and a judgment: "Know that these will never hold royal sceptres, because they have emerged from a brothel".[103] Apart from what this says about legitimate birth and succession (to be dealt with below), both the actual episode at the Burgundian court as well as the report of it by Jonas make clear that to such a blessing much significance was attributed. Another episode from the *Vita Columbani* suggests a similar conclusion. At the time of the battle of Zülpich (612) Columbanus, staying at Bregenz, had a dream vision of the battle at the very time it was actually occurring. When urged to pray for king Theudebert II's victory, the saint refused to do so, what amounted to refusing the king his blessing.[104] And, of course, we learn that the deaths

100 The Chronicle of Fredegar, with its episodes on Columbanus borrowed from Jonas, provided the basis for the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* which was sponsored by Pippin III's uncle Childebrand and the latter's son Nibelung. See chapter four, section three.

101 On Irish Christianity in the Early Middle Ages see: Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*. On early medieval Ireland also: Ó. D. Cróinin, *Early Medieval Ireland, 400-1200* (London and New York 1995).

102 D. Bullough, 'The career of Columbanus' in: M. Lapidge ed., *Columbanus. Studies on the Latin writings* (Woodbridge 1997) 1-29.

103 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 19: *Nequaquam ... istos regalia sceptra suscepturus scias, quia de lupanaribus emerserunt.*

104 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 28: *Ea ergo hora, qua apud Tulbiacum commissum est bellum, supra querqui putrefactam truncum vir Dei legens resedebat; quem subitus sopor obpressit, et quid inter duos reges ageretur, vidit. Moxque excitatus, ministrum vocat cruentamque regum pugnam indicat; multum humanum sanguinem fundi suspirat. Cui temerario conatu minister ait:"Pater mi, Theudeberto tuis precibus prebe suffragium ...". Ad haec beatus Columbanus: "Stultum ac religione alienum consilium administras. Non enim ita Dominus voluit, qui nos pro inimicis nostris orare rogavit; in arbitrio esse iam iusti iudicis, quid de eis fieri vellit".*

of both sons of Theuderic II as well as of king Theudebert II occurred after the saint had refused to bless them or pray for them. The message conveyed is clear: kings should beware lest benevolent intercession by holy men be withheld from them. Kings and dynasties were thought to profit greatly when blessed by a holy man, a *sapiens*. There may be an Irish connection to this notion[105] and it is apparent with Columbanus in Francia, but the Old Testament precedents are probably decisive, the best-known instances being Samuel haranguing Saul and Nathan admonishing David.

Prophecy

A related notion is provided by the idea that a prophecy spoken by a holy man, whether auspicious or inauspicious, greatly influences the vicissitudes of a king and / or his progeny.[106] This notion, too, is attested with Columbanus, and here too there are strong Old Testament examples. Jonas credits Columbanus with three prophecies on Merovingian kings. The first prophecy is reported in the course of the conflict between Columbanus and king Theuderic II on sexual and reproductive morals and forecasts the fall from power of the king and his offspring.[107] The second prophecy concerns Chlothar II, to whom the holy man – in his quality as a *sapiens* – announces that, within three years, he will rule the kingdoms of his two cousins.[108] The final prophecy is addressed to Theudebert II, whom Columbanus counsels to opt for a monastic life; when the king scornfully rejects this advice,[109] the holy man announces that the king, refusing to voluntarily accept monkhood, will before long be forced to do so.[110] The prophecies represent, of course, *ex post*-constructions by Jonas. He will have included them in his work to settle (Columbanus') scores with the two brothers Theuderic II en Theudebert II while at the same time adding to the legitimacy of Chlothar II and

105 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 360-361.

106 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 191-198.

107 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 19: *Vir Dei respondit: "... cito tuum regnum funditus ruiturum et cum omni propagine regia dimersurum". Quod postea rei probavit eventus.*

108 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 24: *tua intra triennii tempus in ditione utrorum regnum venire*. The *Vita* also reports another prohecy concerning the future reign of Chlothar over the three *Regna*. In *Vita Columbani I* c. 19, Columbanus admonishes his guard Ragumundus: *Memento ... o Ragumunde, Chlotharium, quem nunc spernitis, intra triennium dominum habetis*. As this prophecy is not made to a member of the *stirps regia* but to one of Theuderic's *leudes*, I consider it a "derived" prohecy.

109 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 28: … *se numquam audisse, Mervengum, in regno sublimatum, voluntarium clericum fuisse*.

110 Ibidem: *Si voluntarius nullatenus clericatus honorem sumat, brevi invitus clericus existat.*

his successors.[111] At the same time, at least the first of the prophecies mentioned by Jonas in its wording echoes some of the formulation of the *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* chapter on the *rex iniquus* (see chapter two), in which the Irish author of this work appears aware of a kind of magical sympathy between the conduct of a king and the welfare of his realm. This suggests that Jonas underwent, to some degree and probably indirectly, notions current in contemporary Ireland. Yet here too, as in his comparison of Brunhild with Jezabel,[112] the biblical queen whose conduct helped bring along various disasters for the kingdom of Israel, it is the Old Testament influence that is decisive.[113]

Peregrinatio

Jonas more or less constructs his narrative of Columbanus' life along the lines of the saint's thirty-year *peregrinatio* from Bangor via Annegray and Luxeuil to the Neustrian and Austrasian court, Bregenz and finally Bobbio. The *peregrinatio* provides the plot framework of the narrative. As a *peregrinus* Columbanus and his followers may well have thought of themselves as occupying a special position.[114] They derived prestige from their journeys. Jonas certainly attached great value to Columbanus' status as a *peregrinus*[115] and provides numerous examples of the honorable way in which Columbanus was received by the worldly great: "Sigebert I",[116] Theuderic II (at least initially),[117] Chlothar II,[118] Chagneric,[119] Autharius[120] and Theudebert II.[121] A great practical significance of the journeys of the peregrines lies in the fact that, in the course of the VIIth century, monastic founders – Columbanians as well as others – could

111 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 352-355, suggests that there is a link between Jonas introducing the three prophecies and his misnaming the king of Austrasia/Burgundy in chapters 6 and 18 of the first part of the *Vita*, where the name Sigebert is given instead of then correct name Childebert (II). Jonas' aim would have been to discredit the Eastern Merovingians, that is Sigebert I, Brunhild and their descendants.

112 *Vita Columbani*, I, 18. J.L. Nelson, Queens as Jezebels. Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian history' [originally 1978] in: idem, *Politics and ritual in early medieval Europe* (London 1986) 1-48.

113 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 196-198.

114 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, chapter 8.

115 The great spiritual significance Jonas attaches to Columbanus' *peregrinatio* appears from the style and symbolism he uses in *Vita Columbani*, I, 4. The departure of Columbanus and his twelve companions from Bangor is likened to the journeys of Christ and His disciples through the Holy Land.

116 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 6; the king's name cannot be correct. It was probably Guntram of Burgundy.

117 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 18.

118 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 24.

119 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 26.

120 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 26.

121 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 27.

become active in hitherto remote territories of the *Regnum Francorum*.[122] Columbanus' example and Jonas' narrative set the context for a practice in which the pilgrimage conveys honor and prestige to the pilgrim, granting him a lordly right to hospitality at the royal court and in great houses, allowing him to associate on equal footing with kings and lords. Regardless of the extent to which Jonas' construction reflects the realities of Columbanus' relations with the great, the image it purveys is clear enough. A holy man, a *sapiens*, rubs shoulders with the great of this world – in the way in which Irish bishops are hardly second to kings.[123] This notion, in its turn, set the tone for much the relationship between kings and clerics in Francia throughout later Merovingian and Carolingian times.[124]

A similar notion on parity between the lordly or worldly and the sacred or spiritual is bound up with Columbanus' monastic foundations.

In a sense, monastic foundations can be seen as milestones marking out Columbanus' *peregrinatio*. Jonas mentions Annegray,[125] Luxeuil,[126] Bregenz[127] (where, it appears, a monastic foundation was attempted but failed) and Bobbio.[128] They were all situated on royal land, yet the kings involved appear not to have attached any specific[129] conditions to their grants; if indeed they were grants: in the case of Luxeuil Jonas' narrative suggests that Columbanus occupied the site without any form of royal consent. Moreover, Jonas' narrative strongly suggests that the monasteries founded by Columbanus, as well as those founded by his aristocratic friends in Neustria and Burgundy, tended to autonomy not only in the territorial, but also in the spiritual sense, as did most monasteries in his native Ireland. Kings and lords respected this autonomy.[130]

In constructing his narrative of Columbanus' life around the key elements of blessing, prophecy and pilgrimage, Jonas provided his audience with a legend which, among other things, teaches three lessons. First, the success of a king – or a dynasty – is to a certain (even large) extent dependent on the blessing by holy men (or the church). Second, the fortunes of a king and his offspring may be foretold through prophecy, and kings had better

122 A. Diem, *Keusch und Rein. Eine Untersuchung zu den Ursprüngen des frühmittelalterlichen Klosterwesen und seine Quellen* (Amsterdam 2000), 132-161

123 On the complex but exalted status of Irish bishops see Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, chapter 6. Also: Brown, *The rise of Western Christendom*, chapter 10.

124 F. Prinz, 'Columbanus, the Frankish nobility and the territories east of the Rhine' in: H.B. Clarke en M. Brennan ed., *Columbanian monasticism* (Oxford 1981) 73-87.

125 *Vita Columbani,* I, c. 6.

126 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 10.

127 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 27.

128 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 29.

129 Of course there will have been formulated the usual (non-specific) conditions: immunity, independence from the bishop and the diocesan hierarchy.

130 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, chapter 7.

heed such prophesies. Third, the (wandering) holy man should be treated with respect by kings and their magnates. So should his foundations. These lessons contribute to the formation of a distinct grammar of kingship in the later VIIth and VIIIth centuries, of which we traced the basic characteristics in the previous chapter, a grammar which tends to absorb elements of the sacred and prepares the ground for Carolingian kingship with its strong ecclesiastical overtones.
A strong case for considerable dissemination of the *Vita Columbani* to aristocratic and royal audiences in Merovingian Gaul has recently been presented by O'Hara.[131]

There is an Austrasian focus to this development. The paradigm of blessing, prophecy and *peregrinatio* as used by Jonas in his narrative carries over into narratives which became formative for Austrasian identity.[132] There is Fredegar, who adopts Jonas' report on Columbanus' conflict with Theuderic II and Brunhild almost *verbatim* in the fourth book of his chronicle[133] – whence it finds its way into the Carolingian *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*. There is the *Vita Arnulfi*, in which the redeeming feature of the protagonist is the fact that he becomes a *peregrinus* – against the explicit wish of the king.[134] Also, there is the *Vita Romarici*, where we see mayor of the palace Grimoald possibly discussing sensitive matters with Romaric.[135] In chapter two, section 4.1, I suggested a possible link between this consultation and the impending death of Sigebert III. In my view, the mayor's consultation on such matters with one of Austrasia's leading churchmen will have implied solliciting the blessing of the holy man for the course which Grimoald intended to take. Finally, the *Vitae Amandi* report on their protagonist playing off his authority in either granting or withholding his blessing (baptism) from Dagobert I and his son in ways very reminiscent of Jonas' narrative.[136] The biography of Amandus, the construction of whose legend will be discussed in the next subsection, presents us with episodes which strongly suggest that Irish notions on the sacred, or at least notions we find in Jonas' *Vita Columbani*, fell into fertile earth in VIIth-century Austrasia. In the *Vita Amandi Antiqua* mention is made of the saint's involvement with *pueros transmarinos.*[137] The monastery of Nivelles,

131 O'Hara, 'The Vita Columbani in Merovingian Gaul'.
132 At the same time, it is remarkable thatthere is no Austrasian source which mentions the name of Columbanus.
133 Fredegarius, IV, c. 36.
134 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 17.
135 *Vita Romarici*, c. 8.
136 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 17; *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 15.
137 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, 4; *Vita Amandi I*, c. 9; here the reference is contaminated by a *topos* on prisoners being freed.

for the founding of which Amandus was instrumental,[138] had a strong Irish connection, as appears from the fact that he monastery maintained overseas contacts.[139] Also, a point is made of its first abbess, Gertrude, dying on 17 March, Saint Patrick's Day.[140] And Foilan stayed at Nivelles and his body was brought there after he was murdered.[141]
It was at Nivelles that Grimoald met with bishop Dido of Poitiers,[142] who shortly afterwards was to take the young prince Dagobert to Ireland at Grimoald's request. If, as Gerberding suggests,[143] the meeting between mayor of the palace and bishop was related to the imminent succession of the dying Sigebert III, one may presume that the bishop, too, was asked by Grimoald to bless him and his plans. In this context, it is significant that the meeting took place in a monastery.[144]
It is plausible that the notions used by Jonas of Bobbio to construct Columbanus' legend, and the appearance of similar notions (with possibly Irish connections) in various narratives related to Austrasia, notions which often touch on concepts of kingship, also reflect in the grammar on king and kingship and their relation to the sacred. By associating with the sacred, a king may redeem his kingdom. Conversely, by dissociating himself from the sacred he endangers his peoples welfare, as we may learn from pseudo-Cyprian.

3.2. Amandus as a model saint

Already in the earliest surviving of his *Vitae*, the *Vita Amandi Antiqua,*[145] Amandus is presented as a man who is closely connected with the sea. He was born in the seacoast region of Poitou and spent part of his youth in a monastery on the island of Yeu.[146] On a sea voyage returning from Rome Saint Peter appears to him and tells him not to fear the tempestuous

138 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 2.
139 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 5.
140 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 7.
141 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano.*
142 Ibidem.
143 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 59-60.
144 On the special significance of a monastery vis à vis high-ranking guests staying there – "das Kloster als ideale Kirche" – see P. Willmes, *Der Herrscher-"Adventus" im Kloster des Frümittelalters* (Munich 1976), 47-49.
145 The *Vita Amandi Antiqua* has only been properly appreciated since 1967, when a fragment was found in Innsbruck.. This led to the realisation that a fourteenth century manuscript at Innsbruck contained a complete *Vita* which was closer to a presumptive original than the MGH-versions. [*Sancti Amandi episcopi vita ab auctore anonymo*. J.-P. Migne ed., Patrologia Latina 87, cols 1267-1272]. See Wood, *The missionary life*, 41. Also Verhulst, 'L'action et le souvenir' and Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima'.
146 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 1.

waves.[147] In his preaching he is said to have paid special attention to "men from overseas", *pueros transmarinos,*[148] possibly oblates from Britain or Ireland in continental monasteries.[149] Also he allegedly, after his conflict with king Dagobert I on *capitalia crimina,*[150] pondered the possibility to depart overseas to preach to the Anglo-Saxons.[151] These and similar maritime allusions are also found in the later Lives of Amandus.[152] It all suggests that (the memory of) Amandus was associated with overseas influences. When combined with the *Vita Antiqua*'s explicit mention on Amandus' inclination to the peregrine way of life,[153] the overall impression which results is one of a holy man, a *sapiens*, dedicated to a vagrant life similar to that of Columbanus.

It is not easy to isolate the "real" Amandus from the legend which has been constructed around him in the course of (mainly) the VIIIth century.[154] Yet apart from his *Vitae* we have some information on him of a seemingly more spontaneous and less constructed character which seems to corroborate the impression that Amandus was, first of all, a *peregrinus*. The oldest testimony we have on Amandus stems from Jonas. In his younger years Jonas stayed with Amandus for about three years, in the period around 635. Jonas does not spend many words on his stay with Amandus. In his introduction to the Vita Columbani he writes the following: "… also, I spent three years near the Ocean's shore, sailing down the Scarpe in light boats and carving the languid waterway of the Scheldt in a canoe. Thus my feet often got soaked in the sluggish swamp of Elno, when I was on my way to obtain a decision from the venerable bishop Amandus, who was staying in these ancient places to combat the errors of the Sicambrians with the sword of the Gospel".[155] Thus, in the earliest surviving

147 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 5.

148 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 4.

149 On oblates see M.B. de Jong, *In Samuel's image. Child oblation in the early medieval west* (Leiden 1996).

150 The *Vita Antiqua* is not explicit on Dagobert's *capitalia crimina*: other then in the *Vita Prima*, there is no mention of "libidousness".

151 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 14. This episode is probably made up by the *Vita Antiqua*'s VIIIth-century author, as already in Amandus' day there would hardly have been any need for a continental preachers to go and convert Anglo-Saxons. The author may have implied irony in his remark (Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima'.). Yet his remark on the Anglosaxons may well reflect a genuine association of the historical Amandus with overseas connections.

152 *Vita Amandi I* & *Vita Amandi II. auctore Milone*; see below.

153 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 2 and c. 14.

154 The *Vita Antiqua* may tentatively be dated between 755 and 768. Wood, *The Missionary Life*, 39-41; Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima'.

155 *Vita Columbani*, Introduction, my own translation); *… me et per triennium Oceani per ora vehit et Scarbea lintris abacta ascoque Scaldeus molles secando vias madefacit saepe et lenta palus Elnonis plantas ob venerabilis Amandi pontificis ferendum suffragium, qui his constitutus in locis veteris Sicambrorum errores euangelico mucrone coercet.* On my translation of *… qui his constitutus in locis veteris …* as: "who was staying in these ancient places", see: Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, *constitutere*.

reference to Amandus, he is presented as a vigorous preacher, a bishop who occupies no formal see, and who leads men like Jonas in activities aimed at combating errors by brandishing – like one brandishes a sword, *mucro* – arguments from the Gospel. Jonas' use of the name "Sicambrian" echoes the narrative of Clovis' baptism in Gregory of Tours Histories.[156] It may be programmatic: the authentic Sicambrians of Clovis' days were held to have been converted with their king. Naming the mid-VIIth-century Scheldt people thus would imply that they had reneged.

A slightly younger testimony on Amandus is found in the *Vita Geretrudis* (about 670). Its author in all probability was an Irish monk of Gertrude's own double-monastery of Nivelles, who wrote the *Vita* in c. 670 in commission of Agnes, third abbess of Nivelles.[157] The narrator reports that, following the death of Pippin I in 639, "while (his widow) the *materfamilias*, Itta, daily wondered what to do about herself and about her orphaned daughter, the man of God came to her house, bishop Amandus, preaching the word of God. Ordered by the Lord, he counselled her to found a monastery for her and for her daughter, Gods handmaiden Gertrude, as well as for Christ's servants (the nuns)".[158] Itta followed Amandus' counsel. The account refers to the time about 640, some years after the period at Elno to which Jonas refers. Like Jonas, the narrator of the Life of Gertrude calls Amandus a bishop – and the *Vita Geretrudis* says exactly what his work as a bishop was: he goes around *verbum Dei praedicans*, "preaching the word of God".[159]

Thus, in both accounts Amandus appears as a bishop of the Irish type and a *peregrinus*. According to Jonas, in c. 635 Amandus was staying, [*erat*] *constitutus*, in the Scheldt region. It is not clear how he had got there. It may have been his own initiative, a would fit a *peregrinus*. Amandus' link to Merovingian kingship at that time appears to have been weak and indirect. The account of his alleged request for royal support for his work on the Scheldt had to pass through bishop Aigacharius of Noyon, whom he *humiliter* asked to forward his written plea to king Dagobert I.[160] In addition, Amandus had no strong ties with the pope either, at least initially. In relation to his first alleged visit to Rome no mention is made of his being received by the pope, although the *Vita Prima* compensates this by mentioning an appearance by Saint Peter.[161]

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156 *DLH*, II, c. 31; cf: ... *Mitis depone colla, Sigamber; adora quod incendisti, incende quod adorasti.*

157 Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 305-307.

158 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 2. *Cum cotidie supradicta materfamilias Itta, de se vel de sua orfana filia quid esset factura, cogitaret, adveniens vir Dei ad domum suam Amandus episcopus, verbum Dei praedicans, de Domini iussione rogabat, ut monasterium sibi seu suae filie Dei famulae Gertrudi et Christi familiae construeret.*

159 Ibidem.

160 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 13. On the substance of the request, armed support for Amandus' missionary work, see chapter 5, section 5.

161 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 3.

Thus, the authentic Amandus appears to have been an itinerant bishop without a proper see, who had no strong link with either the court or with the pope. At the same time, he was held in esteem by Pippin's widow Itta and by their children Grimoald, Gertrude and Begga. Amandus clearly possessed spiritual authority. He was a *sapiens*. His sphere of action appears to have been mainly the North of Francia and the frontier areas of Scheldt and Meuse.

His position changed when he was formally installed as bishop of Maastricht in c. 647 – by king Sigebert III and his mayor Grimoald. According to the *Vita Antiqua*, Amandus was "forced by the king" (*coactus a rege*) to become bishop.[162] Amandus failed at Maastricht and there are some indications of the reasons for this failure. The *Vita Antiqua* says that, as bishop, "he went round towns, settlements and manors (*castra, vicos, villas*) where he preached, argued and entreated and during three years demonstrated the ways of God to the populace; and many were converted to the ways of penance".[163] It sounds as if Amandus, while having become a diocesan bishop, continued the ambulatory, peregrine life he may have led at the Scheldt during the previous years, rather than taking up regular administrative tasks. It is also clear that Amandus' approach did not work with the clergy. In the *Antiqua* as well as in the *Prima* and in the *Secunda*, it emphatically is the local clergy at Maastricht who is said to have rejected him. Also a letter of pope Martin to Amandus refers to problems with the clergy.[164] These problems need not have been the only or even the conclusive reason for his resigning as a bishop – which, as such, was a rather exceptional deed. Occurring in 650 or early 651, the resignation may also have been linked to the succession crisis which erupted in Austrasia following the decease of king Sigebert III on – presumably – 1 February 651.[165]

The *déconfiture* which Amandus experienced as bishop of Maastricht must have meant a considerable impediment to the constructors of his legend. Yet various VIIIth-century biographers spent much work on providing Amandus with a rich legend. This triggers several questions. Who were these biographers? Why did they select Amandus to mythologize? And – above all – what was the resulting legend intended to express?

On the biographers some conclusions may be proposed. Each of the three VIIIth-century Lives has its own author. The *Antiqua* and the *Prima* stand in the same textual tradition, the *Secunda* stands apart. The *Vita Antiqua* appears to have been written between 755 and 768 by an author who was

162 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 10.
163 Ibidem.
164 *Vita Amandi II*, II.
165 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 47-66.

connected to circles around Pippin III.[166] The Vita Prima may originate from Salzburg, from 782 or slightly later.[167] The *Vita Secunda* is from the hand of Milo, monk at Elno, who wrote about 850.
We may ponder the possible reasons why the authors elaborated on Amandus' life the way they did.
The answer to this question must lie in specific characteristics of Amandus' perceived biography, characteristics which make him fit to be a model saint for VIIIth-century Austrasia. Now the striking difference between Amandus and most of the VIIth-century saints of Northern Francia and Austrasia is that he could be fitted with a Roman connection. His third biographer, Milo, builds his report around the relationship between pope Martin I (649-655) and Amandus, who was the recipient both of a formal papal letter and a book with synodal decrees.[168] Two aspects of Amandus directly follow from his perceived link with Rome: his special relationship with Saint Peter[169] – the patron saint of Amandus' foundation at Elno – and his alleged missionary mandate. Besides, his legend was enriched with two alleged visits to Rome[170] and although these episodes may well be only *topoi*, they have made themselves felt in other Lives (see section two). At a time when churchmen in Austrasia had to come to terms with the Rome-sponsored strictness of Boniface, the figure of a native champion of missionary work with papal connections of his own would come in useful. In the second half of the VIIIth century, when royal Carolingian self-consciousness took over, with papal support, from mayoral Pippinid caution, the legend of Amandus provided Austrasian contemporaries with an authentic and recognisable role model. He allegedly had his own Roman connection and came to be presented as a prototype of missionary in his own right – and one whose work preceded by a century the activities of Boniface. Also, the legend constructed around Amandus had to say things about kingship.
It is remarkable and cannot be without reason that none of Amandus' Lives make mention of the saint's connections with the Pippinids. We know of these connections from the Life of Gertrude. Besides, Amandus' appointment as bishop of Maastricht must have been made with the explicit approval of Grimoald. The legend constructors omit any reference to this. They may have wished to avoid mention of Grimoald, who was also to be omitted from the *Annales Mettenses Priores.* Also, more generally, they may have desired not to retrospectively touch on Pippinid family history from a time when they were not yet kings. Instead, they choose to elaborate on Amandus' alleged links with Dagobert I and to

166 Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima' and Wood, *The missionary life*, 41.
167 Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima'.
168 *Vita Amandi II*, I, II.
169 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 3, 5; *Vita Amandi I*, c. 7 and 12,
170 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 3, 5; *Vita Amandi I*, c. 6-7 and 10.

invent a miracle involving both Amandus and Dagobert and focussing on the latter's son Sigebert III. In doing so, they completed the model role which they wished to attribute to Amandus. He was depicted as a saint active in Austrasia and who, besides being recognised by Rome and pioneering as a missionary, helped define kingship. Amandus supposedly did so by condemning, on the one hand, the *capitalia crimina* of the Merovingian Dagobert I and, on the other, by baptizing Dagobert's innocent successor in Austrasia.

What, then, was the actual message which the lives of Amandus were intended to convey in the context of the later VIIIth century in Austrasia? One key lies in the baptism episode of the three *Vitae*, which represents pure fiction made up by the legend constructors.[171] From Fredegar we get a report of Sigebert's conception, birth and baptism. "Dagobert admitted to his bed a girl named Ragnetrudis; and by her he had ... a son named Sigebert".[172] Pippin journeys with the infant Sigebert to Dagobert's half-brother king Charibert, who ruled Aquitania.[173] "Charibert came to Orléans and stood godfather to Sigebert".[174]

The account of the *Vitae* is completely different. It is given in the *Antiqua*, the *Prima*, the *Secunda* (in the latter even on two places) and in derived texts like a *Vita Brevis*. It suffices to use the text in the *Vita Prima* as our reference.[175] A paraphrase of the account goes as follows (quotations marked as such).

"King Dagobert was too much given to the love for women and became inflamed by all kinds of libidinous filth,[176] having no offspring; yet he looked to the Lord for help and prayed assiduously that (God) would deign to give him a son who might after him sway the sceptre over his kingdom". A son was born and the king, filled with joy, began to think to whom he would entrust the boy to be baptized. Right away he ordered his servants to go and look for the holy Amandus. For some time ago this bishop had dared to gainsay the king on certain *capitalia crimina*, at which the king "became incensed and (Amandus) was, at his command, after injuries banished from his kingdom (Austrasia) and travelled to far regions there to preach the word of God to the gentiles".[177] When the king's servants at last had found Amandus, the latter made his way to the

171 On baptism in the Middle Ages see J.H. Lynch, *Godparents and kinship in early medieval Europe* (Princeton 1986) and P. Cramer, *Baptism and change in the Early Middle Ages, c. 200-c.1150* (Cambridge 1993).

172 Fredegarius, IV, c. 59.

173 Fredegarius, IV, 61.

174 Fredegarius, IV, 62; *Chairibertus Aurelianis ueniens Sigybertum de sancto lauacro excipit.*

175 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 17.

176 This phrase, or its equivalent, is not found in the *Vita Antiqua*. It "echoes" more or less Fredegarius, IV, c. 60.

177 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 17; *... ipse...in furore accensus, iubente eo, non absque iniuria de regno eius fuerat expulsus, atque remotiore perquirens loca, verbum Dei gentibus praedicabat.*

king, who was staying in his villa of Clichy. When the king saw Amandus he was filled with joy and threw himself at the feet of the blessed man and beseeched him to forgive him the misdeeds he had committed against him. Amandus quickly raised the king from the ground and graciously forgave him. Then the king asked Amandus to baptize his son, and to accept the child in his arms so that he would become the spiritual son of Amandus (*...praecorque, ut eum sacro digneris abluere baptismate atque, ut tibi sit filius spiritalis, in manibus accipere ne dedigneris*). Amandus vehemently rejected this request, because of the Word saying that those who are God's soldiers should not implicate themselves in worldly matters. Having said this, he left the king. Immediately the king sent the *vir illuster* Dado as well as the *vir venerabilis* Eligius after him – who at that time still spent their time, in worldly dress, at the king's court, yet later became most excellent bishops – and they most humbly asked the man of God to honour the king's request: "... condescending to baptize his son in the holy font and to foster him and to give him initial instruction in divine law" (*...ut filium ipsius sacro dignaretur dilui fonte, et ut eum enutriret atque legem inbueret divinam*). They added that, if the man of God would not refuse this, he would henceforth have license to preach wherever he wished to in the kingdom and to collect nations for the faith".[178] Finally Amandus, tired by the words of these two, promised to do as requested. As soon as the king heard this, "he immediately commanded the child itself to be fetched, which, as they say, had been born not more than forty days before. When the holy man had taken the boy in his arms, he blessed him and made him a catechumene. Then, when the prayer had been said but no-one from the multitude watching had yet said 'Amen', the Lord opened the child's mouth and, while everyone present heard it, the child answered with a clear voice: 'Amen'. And then, by administering holy baptism to the child and, now that it was reborn, giving it the name Sigebert, the holy Amandus filled with great joy both the king and all his army".[179]

The credibility of the chronicle of Fredegar, as compared to the hagiography on Amandus, is beyond reasonable doubt. Our VIIth-century historian may be believed when he writes that he composed his "account with facts and deeds ... and (wished to) relate of all that I have

178 Ibidem; *... liberius in regno ipsius [=Dagoberti], vel ubicumque eligeret, haberet licentiam praedicandi, seu et nationes quam plures per hanc gratiam se posse conquiri fatebantur.*

179 *Ibidem*: *[Rex] statim ipsum puerum adduci praecepit, qui ferebatur non plura a nativitate habere dies scilicet quam quadraginta. Accepto igitur vir sanctus in manibus puerum benedicensque eum caticuminum fecit. Cumque, finitam orationem, nemo ex circumstante multitudo respondisset: "amen", aperuit Dominus os pueri, atque, audientibus cunctis, clara voce respondit: "Amen". Statimque eo regenerans sacro baptismate, inpositoque nomine Sygiberto, regem atque omnem eius exercitum tunc sanctus Amandus magno replevit gaudio.*

read or seen that I could vouch for".[180] Fredegar's contemporary history is more credible than hagiography of a hundred years after the facts. Yet the message intended by the VIIIth-century hagiographers is a forceful one. It establishes the autonomous responsibility of the saint vis à vis the king in censuring *capitalia crimina*, safely using a Merovingian and not a Pippinid as case in point. Moreover, the baptism establishes between saint and prince the mutuality proper to godparent and godchild. The mutuality is, in this case, far-reaching. Amandus baptises Sigebert and is honoured by a miracle occurring. Sigebert is beneficiary, too: the miracle affects him intimately and confers a beginning of saintliness on him. The legend constructed around Amandus during the latter VIIIth century makes clear which characteristics, in the view of the hagiographers, should be essential to a saint in his links with kingship. He should be autonomous in his relations with the king. His proper sphere of work, in which he can cooperate with the king but has his own responsibility, would be missionary work. And it helps when he performs a miracle which affects a king. Sigebert's baptism is just such a miracle. There is more to it. The explicit, but concocted, account of the baptism of the king's son harks back to that characteristic quality of the Irish holy man: his power to bless a king and his offspring.[181] We may see that quality expressed in the alleged episode of the anointment of king Pippin, together with his young sons Charles and Carloman, by pope Stephen II in 754.[182] The *Vita Antiqua*, moreover, reports that Dagobert I was gripped by a fever following the fit of rage which led to Amandus' exile.[183] The model which the constructors of Amandus' legend presented owed much to Irish concepts and provides a paradigm for kings and saints to deal with each other.

3.3. Legends about Austrasian kings

King Edwin of Northumbria (616-632/33) had been an exile at the court of East Anglia. He was a pagan at the time. After his rival had been driven from Northumbria, he assumed royal power there and converted to Christianity. After he fell in battle against king Penda of Mercia, a pagan, a cult developed at Whitby, where his body was buried,[184] and Edwin

180 Fredegarius, IV, prologue. ... *legendo simul et eudiendo etiam et uidendo cuncta que certeficatus cognoui*.

181 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 360-361.

182 *Annales Regni Francorum, s.a.* 749 and 750; Anointmet also mentioned in *Anales Mettenses Piores s.a.* 750.

183 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 15.

184 His head had been severed and was kept at York.

became venerated as a saint. We learn this from Bede,[185] and his account – which he wrote in c. 730, a century after Edwin's death – "betrays the existence of already well-developed miracle-stories centred on Edwin's early career".[186] Actual evidence of miracles and a cult are found in the anonymous Whitby Life of Gregory the Great, a work contemporaneous with Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[187] Edwin was married to Aethelburg, who was a kinswoman to Dagobert I of Francia, to whom she sent her children after Edwin's death.[188]

After some struggle Oswald, nephew to the slain Edwin, took over as king in Northumbria (634-642). He, too, became venerated as a saint. In briefly presenting him, I follow the analysis which Wallace-Hadrill[189] offers on his case and, more specifically, on Bede's treatment of the king.[190] "Oswald ... is beloved of God, affable and generous, pious and humble (*humilis*) ... What was more, Oswald's conquests had the effect of spreading Christianity; he could be represented as a missionary-king ... he was *victoriosissimus* because he was *sanctissimus*. ... Like Edwin, Oswald fell in battle to Penda ... as a Christian champion. He, too, was a martyr, although Bede does not use the word".[191] His body, hands and head were buried at Bardney, Bamburgh and Lindisfarne, respectively, where his cult developed.[192]

A third king to achieve sainthood was Oswald's successor in Northumbria, Oswin (644-651). Like Oswald, Oswin is described as a *rex humilis* by Bede; the episode between the king and bishop Aidan is reminiscent of the parity between the Irish *sapiens* and the worldly great.[193] In the interpretation of Wallace-Hadrill: "royal humility is obedience to the church".[194] Like his predecessors, king Oswin died a violent death, in his case through treason.[195] His cult developed around his grave at Tynemouth.

Some remarks are in place on the context and scope of the holiness of Edwin, Oswald and Oswin. The first I borrow from Wallace-Hadrill: "It seems likely that Oswald and other kings directly associated with Celtic

185 *Historia Ecclesiastica,* II, c. 9-20 and III, c. 24.
186 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 8-81. Wallace-Hadrill refers to earlier work of P. Hunter Blair and B. Colgrave and also, admitting that the question of whether or not there is evidence for a secular cult remains open to question, to the work of C.E. Wright.
187 *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, ed. B. Colgrave (Lawrence 1968) 101 and 105; quoted by Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 82.
188 *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, c. 20.
189 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 83-85.
190 *Historia Ecclesiastica,* III, c. 1-4 and 6.
191 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 83-84.
192 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 84.
193 *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, c. 14; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 360-361.
194 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 86.
195 *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, c. 14.

missionaries would have imbibed something of Irish teaching on the moral duties of kings ...".[196] Northumbria lay within the sphere of Irish *peregrini*. The second concerns the fact that their violent deaths made it possible to see the three kings as martyrs.[197] Here lay the origin of their legend which was to persist throughout the generations, regardless of the question whether or not a (popular) cult focussing on their graves started immediately following their deaths or only later. The final remark is that Alcuin in his *Versus de Patribus Regibus et Sanctus Euboricensis Ecclesiae,*[198] written during the reign of Charlemagne, still thought it relevant to remind his Carolingian audience of the special significance of Edwin (a *rex pius*) and Oswald (*sanctissimus*).[199] Having said this, we should keep in mind that, in the view of Nelson, sanctity is by definition an achieved status and must, as such, be well distinguished from characteristics inherent to kingship, sacral or otherwise.[200]

For our analysis it would seem as if the fact that there is no tangible connection between the legends on the three Anglo-Saxon kings mentioned and their three contemporary colleagues from Austrasia diminishes the value of a comparison. Yet two elements suggest at least some "empathy" between the narratives. The first is the fact that the three Northumbrian kings could be seen as martyrs. This element also would become central to the legends of two of the three Austrasian kings, as will be seen. A second element is of personal character: Edwin's widow sent her children to the court of Dagobert I – and this was, of course, only one of many other contacts between the British Isles and Northern Francia / Austrasia: first were the (Irish) *peregrini*, than came Wilfrid and after him the (Anglo-Saxon) missionaries; then there were those Englishmen who, like Alcuin to the court of Charlemagne, were drawn to the promising opportunities offered by Carolingian development. This is not to say that Anglo-Saxon holy kings led to the emergence of holy kings in Austrasia. This was not the case. But it is at least plausible that "Frankish" legend construction of the IXth century and afterward was aware of the legends concerning the Anglo-Saxon kings and used – next to a comparable grammar of kingship – also a similar idiom of royal sanctity.

There were no holy kings comparable to Edwin, Oswald and Oswin in

196 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 84.

197 Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger*, 428-431. Graus' sees the martyr-king as one of the three categories of kings who could achieve sainthood. His three categories are: 1) the monk-king; 2; the king fallen in battle; 3) the murdered or betrayed king (der ermordete und verratene könig).

198 Alcuin, *Versus de patribus, regibus et sanctis Eboracensis ecclesiae*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini 1 (Berlin 1881) 169-206, 169 ff.

199 Alcuin, *Versus de patribus, regibus et sanctis Eboracensis ecclesiae*, 173 and 175; see also Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 87.

200 J.L. Nelson, 'Royal saints and early medieval kingship' in: D. Baker ed., *Sanctity and Secularity. The church and the world*. Studies in Church History 10 (Oxford 1973) 39-44.

VIIth- and VIIIth-century Austrasia – or in the Merovingian *Regnum Francorum*. In later years, however, legends were constructed around the memory of three Austrasian kings from this period: Dagobert I, Sigebert III and Dagobert II. Austrasia had receded into the past by the time these legends were constructed. Yet it is relevant to consider the question whether these belated narratives on royal sanctity may teach us something about the relation between kingship and the sacred in Austrasian times, about the way this relation was appreciated in the (post)Carolingian period and about what the answers to both questions may mean for an identity, originally Austrasian, which continued from Merovingian into Carolingian times.
A brief look at the three legends constructed for the Austrasian kings will contribute to answering these questions.

Dagobert I
Dagobert I was an unlikely candidate for sainthood. Fredegar and the *Vita Amandi I* are both critical on the king's state of grace. Notwithstanding this, according to some "Dagobert may have been the subject of a cult fairly soon after his death",[201] but proof is extremely thin. The *Gesta Dagoberti I Regis Francorum* do not provide this proof either. The work, composed by a monk of Saint-Denis between 800 and 835, constructs the legend of a rather saintly Dagobert I.[202] Dagobert had been, of course, the main sponsor (almost the founder) of Saint-Denis.[203] The author wrote in the very heart of Neustria, at a time when we can no longer speak of Austrasia and when Austrasian identity had evolved into an empire-wide Carolingian identity.[204] Now what properties did the author in the second quarter of the 9th century project on the memory of king Dagobert I? A look at some of the *topoi* he presents brings the answer.
According to the *Gesta's* author the king, having taken up the rule of his father's kingdom (*caput* 23), showed himself "mild to who is faithful to him", but " terrible" and "fervent like a lion" to rebels and faithless. He is "most benevolent" to the pious but forceful against the "ferocity of foreign (heathen) people" (*exterarum gentium feritatem*). He is extremely generous to the church and her priests as well as to the poor and to

201 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 52, referring to 'Folz, Tradition hagiographique'.
202 *Gesta Dagoberti I*, MGH, observations in Krusch' introduction on authorship and time of writing. See also M. Buchner, 'Zur Entstehung und zur Tendenz der *Gesta Dagoberti*. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Eigenkirchswesen im Frankenreich', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 47 (1927) 252-274.
203 L. Levillain, 'Étude sur l'abbaye Saint Denis à l'époque Mérovingienne', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 82 (1925) 5-116 and Thacker, 'Peculiaris patronus noster'.
204 On the transition from Merovingian to Carolingian rule see M. Becher, *Merowinger und Karolinger* (Darmstadt 2009) chapter 3.

pilgrims. He is a forceful soldier (*strenuus*) and an excellent hunter. "And although, especially when he was a naive youth, he did some reprehensible things – also against religion – and acted less cautious than he should have – for nobody can be perfect in everything -, there is no doubt that all his alms-giving, all his praying to the saints and the fact that he did more than any king before him to honour their memory will in the end easily bring him God's mercy".[205] A more reticent appraisal of the king's character is given in *caput* 42, where his decease is reported. The king is described as – among other things – provident in council, careful in judging, forceful (*strenuus*) in military matters, generous in alms-giving, assiduous in maintaining peace within the church and, above all, as a king who keeps his promises to the saints and consolidates their possessions.[206] Among the echoes of Isidore and Fulgentius we find one single specific characteristic of Dagobert which may relate to his Austrasian years: the terror he inspires his gentile enemies. For the rest, his character is constructed of saintly stereotypes.

The monk of Saint-Denis who wrote the *Gesta* in fact groomed the Merovingian sinner Dagobert into a saintly model king who could be adopted by the Carolingians as one of their glorious predecessors, a pious prince whose memory (and donations) were to be honoured for all time. The author employed a rather spectacular *topos* to implement this metamorphosis. In *caput* 44 of the *Gesta*[207] he describes a vision which the hermit John, living on a small island near Sicily, witnessed at the time of Dagobert's death. John saw evil spirits dragging Dagobert's soul across the sea to a nearby volcano, while the terrified soul incessantly invoked the blessed martyrs Denis and Maurice as well as the holy Martin to save him. The saints appeared with a magnificent display of heavenly power, saved Dagobert's soul from his captors and led him to heaven, singing Psalm 64:4, "Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the

205 *Gesta Dagoberti I*, c. 23; *Nempe etsi aliqua more humano reprehensibilia circa religionem gravatus regni pondere ac iuvenilis inlectus aetatit mobilitate minus caute secus quam oportebat exegit, quia nemo in omnibus perfectus esse potest, credendum est tamen, quod tantarum erogatio elemosinarum atque sanctorum oratio, quorum memorias ornare et basilicas ditare ob redemtionem suae animae supra omnes anteriores reges incessanter studebet, apud misericordissmum Dominum, ut hoc ei clementer indulgeret, facillime impetrari posse.*

206 *Gesta Dagoberti I*, c. 42; *Longus est enarrare, quam providus idem rex Dagobertus in consilio fuerit, cautus iudicio, strenuus militari disciplina, quam largus elemosinis quamque studiosus in componenda pace ecclesiarum, precipueque, quam devotus extiterit in ditandis sanctorum cenobiis, prasenti opere declarare, minusque necessarium et maxime ob fastidientium lectorum vitandum tedium, praesertim cum nullis abolenda temporibus luce clariora earum rerum extent iudicia.*

207 *Gesta Dagoberti I*, c. 42; The author states that he found the episode in a *vetustissima carta* which allegedly had been written by Audoinus.

holiness of your temple!"[208] By using these words, the IXth-century author at least suggests that Dagobert is one of the "blessed", that he is *beatus* – but he stops short of outright applying the word to the king. He refers to him as *divae memoriae Dagobertus rex.*[209] In itself, the *Gesta* do not quite "make" Dagobert I a saint. But it presents a convincing image of how a saintly king was to behave and act – and from understandable motives the monk of Saint-Denis projected this image on the founder of his home abbey. Yet this founder had started out as a king in Austrasia and his memory remained present there. It became associated with the memories of the Austrasian holy women Irmina of Oeren and Adela of Pfälzel, whom popular tradition made into daughters or at least descendants of the king.[210] The *Gesta Dagoberti I* were read at the Carolingian court. Louis the Pious refers to the work in a letter he wrote to abbot Hilduin of Saint-Denis in 835, in which he mentions Dagobert as a martyr.[211] As such, the dead king contributed to the Carolingian grammar of kingship – and of the sacred. It is, maybe, no coincidence that the only other Merovingian kings about whom hagiographic legends were constructed were his Austrasian son and grandson.

Sigebert III

The construction of the legend on Sigebert III presents a slightly more complicated case than does his father Dagobert I's legend. The only medieval Life we have of Sigebert III is the late XIth-century (!) *Vita Sancti Sigeberti regis Austrasiae*, from the hand of the king's namesake Sigebert de Gembloux. This *Vita* is a synthetic construction dating from four centuries after Sigebert's death.[212] Beyond proving that king Sigebert was the object of hagiographic legend construction in the XIth century

208 *Gesta Dagoberti I*, c. 44; A similar vision, albeit with opposite outcome. is reported on Theuderic the Great in *Ex Gregorii Magni dialogorum libris*, MGH SS rer. Lang. 540. The translation of the psalm quoted in the *Gesta Dagoberti* is the English standard version of psalm 65:4. The axctual Latin text provided in the *Gesta* is from the Vulgate, *Psalmi iuxta LXX*, where it is numbered as 64:5 (*Beatus quem elegisti et assumisti, Domine; inhabitabit in atriis tuis. Replebimur in bonus domus tuae, sanctum est templum tuum, mirabile in equitate*).

209 *Gesta Dagoberti I*, c. 46; the monk of Saint Denis inserts the words *divae memoriae* in a text he borrows from Fredegar.

210 M. Werner, *Adelsfamilien im Umkreis der frühen Karolinger* (Sigmaringen 1982) 49-60.

211 *Epistolae variorum inde a morti Caroli Magni usque ad divisionem imperii*, ed. E. Dummler, MGH Epistolae Epp. 5 (Berlin 1899) 299-360, 325-327. *Ut videlicet unus ex priscis Francorum regibus Dagobertus, qui eundem pretiotissimum Christi martirem veneratus non mediocriter fuerat, et vita inmortali est sublimatus, et per eius adiutorium, sicut divina ac celebris ostensio perhibet, a poenis est liberatus inque vita perenni desiderabiliter constitutus.* See also Krusch' introduction to the *Gesta Dagoberti I*, 396-397.

212 *Vita Sigeberti III regis Austrasiae*. Sigebert of Gembloux, ed. M. Bouquet, 'Vita Sancti Sigeberti regis Austrasiae', *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France* 2 (Paris 1869) 597-602.

and suggesting that some (modest) cult may have existed, it does not help us much. A more authentic source on the connection between Sigebert and the sacred is formed by the VIIIth-century *Vitae* of Amandus, in which the child Sigebert becomes instrumental for a miracle ascribed to the saint. The memory of Sigebert was henceforth linked to the *virtus* of Amandus.

Sigebert III's rule attests to a series of pious grants and deeds. According to the *Vita Sancti Sigeberti*, the king founded in Metz the church of Saint-Martin, where he was later buried.[213] Also, the king furnished the land on which the double monastery of Stavelot-Malmédy was founded in the late forties of the sixth century.[214] Its first abbot became Remaclus, under whose guidance the foundation developed auspiciously.[215] Before, Remaclus had been the first abbot of Eligius' foundation at Solignac[216] and when he had first come to Austrasia in c. 644/645 it had been king Sigebert III who had commissioned him to found a monastery at Cugnon on the Semois, a foundation which appears to have failed.[217] Sigebert's role in all this may have been more than just ceremonial. Gerberding points out that Stavelot-Malmédy was founded on royal land, not on land owned by Grimoald.[218] Remaclus' foundations in the Ardennes may have come into being under the auspices of the young king himself.

The *Vita Boniti*, which dates from c. 715, reports positively on the king, who is described as a friendly patron to young Bonitus.[219] There is a suggestion that Chlodulf, the son of Arnulf, who became the third successor of his father as bishop of Metz, was associated with Sigebert's court.[220] It was Sigebert III who made Amandus bishop of Maastricht in c. 647.[221] Although none of Amandus' Lives mention the king's name in this context, it is plausible that this association between king and bishop contributed to the connection which the VIIIth-century constructors

213 *Vita Sigeberti III*, V, c. 17.

214 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 81; for the dating of this charter see Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 51 (incl. note 15).

215 *Vita Remacli*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 88-111, c. 4; *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 23.

216 F. Baix, 'Saint Remacle et les abbayes de Solignac et de Stavelot-Malmédy' in: *Revue Bénédictine* (1951) vol. 61, 167-200.

217 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 81, 215, 216, 217, 218. See also: Baix, 'Saint Remacle', *loc. cit*.

218 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 122. "The fact that he (Grimoald) administered the founding of Stavelot-Malmedy has been held up as evidence that he owned land in the area. But as we have seen, that land was ... royal land, and in founding the double monastery, he was acting as Sigebert III's agent".

219 *Vita Boniti*, c. 2.

220 Desiderius of Cahors, *Desiderii episcopi Cadurcensis epistolae*, ed. W. Arndt, MGH Epistolae Epp. 3 (Berlin 1882) 191-214, I, 8. The editor, W. Arndt, hints at Chlodulf's mayoralty in note 2 on page 197.

221 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 10; *... coactus a rege ...*

of Amandus' legend emphasised between their hero and the king. In the case of the church council of Bourges (c. 650) a self-assured letter of king Sigebert to bishop Desiderius of Cahors adds to the impression of a king purposely – and personally – active in church matters. Bishop Vulfoleudus of Bourges having convoked the council, the king makes clear that he ought to have been informed of and consulted on it beforehand. The canonical rules as well as the custom under former kings are clear about it, the king writes: "without our knowledge there ought not to be held a synodal council in our kingdom".[222] As things are, Desiderius is politely but insistently told not to attend the council.

All in all, Sigebert III had rather a high profile as benefactor and friend of the church. His memory will have been honoured at various abbeys and churches from an early time onward. However, in the end it was Sigebert III's untimely death in 651[223] and the remarkable events following it – the abduction of his infant son, the controversial succession by Childebert the Adoptivus, the fall and death of Grimoald – that helped shape his memory into that of a pious king who was betrayed by his enemies.

An early reference to the betrayal is found in the *Visio Baronti*, written about 680,[224] where not only bishop Vulfoleudus is consigned to eternal punishment in hell, but also bishop Dido of Poitiers, [225] the prelate who, following Sigebert's death and in league with Grimoald, had conveyed the king's infant son to Ireland.

Seen in this light, it may be that Graus' thesis that "there was no tradition at all" for the eldest *Vita Sigeberti* (or, earlier, for the monks of Metz) to build upon,[226] is not entirely justified. Even if the *Vita Sancti Sigeberti* is mainly no more than "a learned-antiquarian and uninteresting journey-work"[227] it does provide us, in combination with Sigebert's monastic charters and with references from some other narratives mentioned above, with an idea on how Sigebert III was appreciated or at least depicted in later times – as a king who combined great merits towards the church with steadfastness against adversity and treachery, a king associated with a major saint who, in his turn, had come to embody the missionary ambition which in early Carolingian times was projected back into VIIth-century Austrasia.

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222 *Desiderii Epistolae*, II, 17. *(... ut sine nostra sciencia synodalis concilius in regno nostro non agatur*). See also Y. Hen, 'The structure and aims of the *Visio Baronti*'.

223 Chronological computation by Gerberding (Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, chapter 4).

224 *Visio Baronti*, introduction Krusch, 368-373.

225 *Visio Baronti*, c. 17.

226 Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger*, 401, n 596.

227 Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger*, 402; ... ein gelehrt-antiquarisches uninteressantes Machwerk.

Dagobert II

The legend of Dagobert II appears to be more one-sidedly based on martyrdom than his father Sigebert's. The king was murdered by his enemies in 679 in the forest north of Dun sur Meuse, on the eastern banks of the Meuse.[228] His body was transported to Stenay, where it was buried. Evidence of a cult there is very late. We have a charter of Godfrey with the Beard, duke of Lorraine, from 1069, in which he donates the church of Saint Dagobert near the *villa* of Stenay to the monastery of Gorze, near Metz.[229] The charter refers to the canons at Stenay having neglected their duties, wich prompted Godfrey to have Stenay reformed by Gorze.[230] These canons were originaly installed there in 872, after the "discovery" of Dagobert's grave in the church of St.-Remy in Stenay and the official creation of the cult by the elevation of the relics on the 10th of September that year, by archbishop Hincmar of Reims and king Charles the Bald.[231]

At some time, after Godfrey's donation and with the date of the oldest manuscript, early XIIth century, as *terminus ante quem*, [232] the *Vita Dagoberti III* [sic] *Regis Francorum* was written,[233] ostensibly at the request of what was since 1069 the fraternity at Stenay and to provide them with a text to read at the day of Dagobert's commemoration,[234] 23 December. Graus has argued that the cult at Stenay was not spontaneous and resulted only from the efforts of the clerics. According to him, the late date as well as the obvious imperfections of the *Vita* ("miserable patchwork"), mixing up the biographies of Dagobert II and Dagobert III,

228 *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 33; *… ibique nuper amico suo fideli Daeghoberhto rege per dolum ducum et consensu episcoporum – quod absit! – insidiose occiso.* Ebroin may have been behind it: see Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 233. The account of the murder in the *Vita Dagobert III Regis Francorum* 12 strongly suggests treason. The king, while resting during a hunt in the Forest of Woëvre, is said to have been killed by a *filiolus* of his, i.e. by a godson of his, someone who very much counted as a confidant. See also 'Folz, Tradition hagiographique'.

229 Charter mentioned and quoted by Levison in his introduction to the MGH-edition of the *Vita Dagoberti III*, 509.

230 Ibidem: *ecclesiam S. Dagoberti apud Sathanacum villam iuris nostri et pretiosis ipsius sancti martyris ossibus et multis aliis sanctorum pignoribus illustratam, sed a canonicis inibi sub carnali vita degentibus et sua potius quam divina quaerentibus usquequaque neglectam …*

231 *Vita Dagoberti III regis Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 509-524, c. 14-15, and chartularium of Gorze, quoted in ibidem, 521, note 1.

232 *Vita Dagoberti III,* c. 14.

233 *Vita Dagoberti III*, introduction Krusch 509-511.

234 *Vita Dagoberti III*, prologue. *Fraternitas itaque Satanagensis flagitans rogitat, ut arduum valdeque sanctum aggrediar opus de gloriosi regis Dagoberti actibus*.

make this clear.[235] This makes it impossible to link any characteristics of Dagobert II mentioned in this text back to Merovingian times.

Holy kings – concluding remarks
No Austrasian king acquired a fully-fledged cult immediately following his death. The three mentioned Austrasian kings, however, became subject of hagiographic legend construction. From the products of these construction processes – the *Gesta Dagoberti I* (c. 830), the *Vita Sancti Sigeberti Regis Austrasiae* (c. 1000) and the *Vita Dagoberti III regis Francorum* (late IXth century) – as well as from other narrative texts, we may deduce some elements of what was considered important in the relationship between kings and the sacred in the period following the Austrasian VIIth century. We cannot establish any immediate connection between the phenomenon of VIIth-century Anglo-Saxon holy kings and the (later) development of hagiographic legend concerning our three Austrasian would-be saints. But some elements concerning the grammar of kings and the sacred which remained crucial to Carolingian kingship may be deduced. For Dagobert I, his forcefulness against heathen people was praised. For Sigebert III, his close association with the leading Austrasian saint, Amandus, was positively emphasised.

Section 4. An Austrasian topography of the sacred

Ancient dioceses and new monastic foundations
In chapter two the "Klosterpolitik" of Neustrian and Austrasian kings was discussed.
Its origins, which included impulses from Ireland through *peregrini* like Columbanus, Furseus and Foilan, will not be discussed here – apart from stating that Jonas of Bobbio and the anonymous authors of the

235 Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger*, 403, analysing the *Vita*, with Levison, as a work in which the author had mixed up Dagobert II with Dagobert III (p. 403, n 604). On the mix-up between the two kings the following observations may be made. The only reason why we surmise that the *Vita* contains elements of the lives of both kings is the account of the king's murder in the Forest of Woëvre, in caput 12, which we connect with Dagobert II because the *Vita Wilfridi* informs us that the latter was murdered. However, the *Vita Wilfridi* does not provide any additional details which allow us to be certain that the *Vita Wilfridi* is referring to the same murder as the *Vita Dagoberti III*. The Forest of Woëvre is not mentioned. Therefore, the account of the assassination in the *Vita Dagoberti III* could well refer to the murder of Dagobert III – were it not for the fact that the *Liber Historiae Francorum* reports that Dagobert III died of a disease: *aegrotans mortuus est* (*LHF*, 52). If the *LHF* were wrong here, there would be no reason whatsoever to assume that the *Vita Dagoberti III* is mixed up with elements from the life of Dagobert II.

narratives on Furseus and Foilan participated in the general tendency of legend-constructing.[236] Nor will we deal here with the various accounts on the founding and patronage of monasteries,[237] or with the *patrocinia* of bishoprics and monastic foundations,[238] as these have little relevance for the purpose of this section: present the topography of the sacred as it developed in Austrasia in the century between c. 640 and c. 740. This topography – which in the end formed part of the geographical backdrop against which Austrasianness could manifest itself – is an expression of a culture in which bishops like Arnulf or Lambert worked to consolidate episcopal authority, and in which kings and other worldly great were inspired to found monasteries. In so far as we may consider, for instance, the VIIth-century Pippinids in the Sambre-Meuse area as one of the Austrasian "cores of tradition" (in the sense of Wenskus,[239] see chapter five), the monastic foundations sponsored by them may be understood as topographical nodes of this tradition, of their identity and ideology. To stay with the Pippinids: it is meaningful that foundations like Nivelles and Fosses have an Irish tinge to them. It came to them through Itta, Gertrud and probably Grimoald.[240]

Before the VIIth century, Christian topography in the Northeast of the *Regnum Francorum* could be defined in terms of episcopal sees (in most cases chief towns of Roman *civitates*). In these lands, the future Austrasia, continuity had been broken because of the Vth-century invasions. In the VIth century Merovingian rulers and their bishops had effected a "restoration". Bishops had been reinstated at Cologne and Maastricht as well as at Mainz.[241] This development provided the basic geographical

236 *Vita Columbani*; *Vita Fursei*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover and Leipzig 1902) 423-451 and *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano.*

237 The standard work in this respect is Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*. See also Levisons edition, Adalgisel Grimo, *Testamentum*, ed. Levison, W. 'Das Testament des Diakons Adalgisel-Grimo vom Jahre 634', *Trierer Zeitschrift* 7 (1932) 69-85 and M. Gaillard, 'Die Frauenklöster in Austrasien' in: A. Wieczorek, U. Koch and C. Braun ed., *Die Franken, Wegbereiter Europas. Vor 1500 Jahren König Chlodwig und seine Erben* (Mainz 1996) 452-458.

238 For the VIIth century, the situation on *patrocinia* in Austrasia is fluid. It was the time when the bishops who were eventually to become patrons themselves were still alive and active: Arnulf, Lambert, Willibrord (Utrecht) are examples. The same is true for monastic founders: Amandus, Remaclus, Gertrud, Foilan, Willibrord again (Echternach). Apart from this, the number of foundations under patronage (more or less) of Saint Peter is remarkable: Fosses, Lobbes, Malonne are cases in point. See also E. Ewig, 'Die Kathedralpatrozinien im römischen und fränkischen Gallien', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 79 (1960) 1-61.

239 Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung.*

240 Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 72 ff; *Vita Geretrudis*; *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano*; On Grimoald's "Irish tinge": cf his presence at Fosses in 750 end the fact that he sent off young Dagobert II to Ireland.

241 Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 114.

organisation for the church.[242] In the early VIIth century the main Austrasian episcopal sees were Cologne, Maastricht, Trier, Metz and Mainz. Of these, Maastricht, Metz and Cologne figure most in our VIIth- and VIIIth-century narrative texts.

In the Pippinid lands the former diocese of Tongres had now become the bishopric Maastricht, where the tomb of Servatius was situated.[243] Further south lay Metz, *sedes regni*[244] as well as episcopal see, where Arnulf and Goëric had consolidated ecclesiastical authority. When the Carolingians annexed the memory of Arnulf – whom Goëric had buried in the Apostles Church, henceforth Saint-Arnulf's Church – and his grave church became resting place to, among others, Pippin II's son Drogo,[245] the city gained in prestige. Sigebert III was buried outside the walls of Metz in Saint-Martin's church.[246] Cologne had its cult of Gereon and Severin, who both were commemorated by the author of the *Vita Dagoberti III regis Francorum* and to whom he added – a nice example of legend construction – Saint Chunibert.[247]

In the course of the VIIth century, the geographic Christian infrastructure provided by these episcopal sees appears to have lost something of its ecclesiastical legitimacy or robustness. Bishops of Maastricht like Amandus and Lambertus remained prominent associates to the royal court, but had a hard time as bishops.[248] Cologne's bishop Chunibert became mayor of the palace in the early VIIth century, but his successors in Cologne lacked authority and prestige and when next we hear about Cologne in our narrative sources we are told about its strategic importance in the civil wars of 714-717, but its bishop is not even named.[249] The fact that Dagobert I had a church built at Utrecht and granted the place to Chunibert of Cologne[250] (on this tradition: see section 2, above) fits in the process of restoration – whereas the subsequent silence on Utrecht in our sources suggests that here, too, ecclesiastical robustness failed, for the time being. Also the episode shows that building a church was considered an effective way to stake out a claim of authority – which

242 Anton, 'Die Trierer Kirche' and H.H. Anton, 'Bischof und Civitas. Kirchliche Grundlagen und politische Dimensionen bischöflicher Amtsführung' in: A. Wieczorek, U. Koch and C. Braun ed., *Die Franken, Wegbereiter Europas. Vor 1500 Jahren König Chlodwig und seine Erben* (Mainz 1996) 373-380.

243 Linssen, *Historische opstellen*, specifically 86-111; F.C.J.W. Theuws, ‚Maastricht as a centre of power in the early middle ages' in: F.C.J.W. Theuws, M.B. de Jong en C. van Rijn ed., *Topographies of power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden 2001), 155-216.

244 On Metz as *sedes regni* see Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 50 ff and 93 ff.

245 Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich* 181 ff.

246 *Vita Sigeberti III*, V, c. 17. See also Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church*.

247 *Vita Dagoberti III*, c. 11.

248 *Vita Amandi I*, 18 and *Vita Landiberti vetustissima*, 5-8.

249 *LHF*, 52.

250 Bonifatius, *Epistolae*, 109.

is something different from following up missionary ambitions. This claim of authority was expressed primarily through founding a religious institution and secondarily by the choice of place: in the case of Utrecht an ancient and deserted Roman fortress (much as had been Annegray, which king Guntram had granted to Columbanus to found his first monastic community[251]). Although Dagobert's founding or restoring of the Utrecht church was not followed by immediate success, the "format" of his action was promising, contributing to the development of a new kind of Christian topography. This topography ultimately would consist of foundations which were linked to the king or his court and which were located in hitherto vacant or deserted places, thus creating or restoring a spatial paradigm of religious significance and authority.

Yet this new topography of significance and authority, based upon ancient Roman cities and on restored bishops' sees and churches, represents only half of the total topography of the sacred as it arose in VIIth-century Austrasia. The other half found its roots and origins in ascetic ideals, ideals which are reflected in a number of our narratives, for instance: the *Vita Columbani*, the *Vita Arnulfi* and the *Vitae Amati, Romarici et Adelphii*. When a fusion occurred between such ideals and the ambitions of pious families or individuals (Romaric, the Pippinids) to give tangible expression to their Christian identity, this changed the religious landscape of Francia. Royal commitment to the new ascetic ideals – whether Irish-inspired or not – showed the way. According to a plausible reconstruction by Ewig it was Chlothar II who provided a crucial stimulus for the new monasticism of the VIIth century, specifically after he had added, in 613, Austrasia and Burgundy to his kingdom.[252] The promotion of monastic communities was considered a good means to provide the founders, specifically when they were kings or at least connected to the royal court, with added authority and prestigious support from strategically located "powerhouses of prayer".[253]

Before the monastic foundations of the VIIth century, such nexuses of religious life were conspicuously lacking in Austrasia. There was no equivalent, in the Northeast, of Radegund's Poitiers or Sigismund's Saint Maurice. When Arnulf wanted to retire from the world, he became a hermit in the Vosges, "like a new Elias".[254] There was no coenobitic community he could have joined. Yet at about the same time when Arnulf withdrew from court – and only some seven years after Chlothar's reuniting the *Regnum Francorum* under his *monarchia*,[255] things began to change. Amatus and Romaric founded Remiremont in the 620's. No doubt the

251 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 6.
252 Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 123 ff.
253 Brown, *The rise of western Christendom*, 219.
254 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 21.
255 Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 126.

founding of this monastic community at *Castrum Habendensium*, in the wilderness of the Vosges, was stimulated from Columbanus' foundation at Luxeuil: according to his Life, Amatus had been sent by the brothers of Luxeuil to go to certain places of the Austrasians, in order that these places would profit from his piety.[256] Although situated in a remote region, Remiremont was strongly oriented towards the Austrasian heartland. Romaric, the monastery's second abbot, had ties with Grimoald.[257] Thus, the Austrasian court was the obvious beneficiary of the *laus perennis* which was installed at Remiremont by Amatus.[258] Like Remiremont, Amandus' community at Elno (founded c. 630) felt the influence from Luxeuil. Jonas, Amandus' assistant around 635, had stayed at Luxeuil in the time of abbot Eustasius. Amandus himself, as said before, was strongly influenced by overseas concepts. His position as an itinerant bishop, too, reflected this. Although already a bishop at the time when he worked with Jonas,[259] this did not prevent him from becoming Elno's first abbot – a combination reminiscent of overseas traditions. Thus, influences from Luxeuil and / or from overseas appear to have been seminal in stimulating the development from eremitic to coenobitic asceticism in Austrasia, a development which started from the rims of the kingdom (Scheldt area, Vosges).
The concept caught on – no doubt also stimulated by monastic developments in Neustria and Burgundy. The monastic topography developed further when Amandus counselled Itta with relation to the founding of Nivelles in c. 630[260] and when close ties later developed between Nivelles and the Irish foundation (651[261]) at Fosses, where Foilan and his brother Ultan became the first abbots and were afterwards venerated as saints.[262] In the meantime king Sigebert III's "Klosterpolitik" led to the founding, by Remaclus, of Cugnon (644; abortive) and of Stavelot-Malmédy (645/50). Although founded on royal land, these foundations were in fact wilderness settlements – and purposefully so.[263] This fitted the ascetic ideal with which (royal) founders wished to associate themselves. At the same time, by transforming deserted

256 *Vita Amati*, c. 6: *... directus a fratribus, ut quasdam urbes Austrasiorum lustraret; multa enim gratia predicationis in illo vigebat.*
257 *Vita Romarici*, c. 8.
258 *Vita Amati*, c. 10: *... ibique ... multis virginibus psallentium per septem turmas, in unaquaque duodenis psallentibus, die noctuque iugiter instituit.*
259 *Vita Columbani*, prologue: *pontifex.*
260 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 2.
261 Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 76.
262 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 7; *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano*. On the cult of Foilan see Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 88-89.
263 *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 81. In his charter, Sigebert III stipulates that no-one was to enter an area with a circumference of twelve miles surrounding Stavelot-Malmédy. *...ob cavenda pericula animarum inhabitantium ..., ut girum girando in utrorumque partibus monasteriorum mensurentur plus numeris milibus dextrorum saltibus duodecim, ut absque inpressione populi vel tumultuatione saeculari Deo soli vacarent.*

places into centres of authority, monastic topography contributed to the dissemination of authority and correctness throughout the land. In a later stage a monastery like Fosses became a royal abbey[264] – which was in fact a formalisation of a previously unofficial arrangement. Soon, the topography became richer and denser when, apart from the king and the Pippinids, others also took the initiative and founded abbeys like Moustier (647/50),[265] Malonne (founded on behalf of the aristocrat Odacrus, by the Anglo-Saxon bishop Bertuinus,[266] 651) and Lobbes (Landelinus, stimulated by bishop Aubert of Cambrai,[267] c. 660).[268]

Prayer, power and monasteries

Gradually, three characteristics became firmly entwined in Austrasian monastic policy: firstly a synergy between authority and prayer; secondly, a topography proclaiming royal power throughout the land; thirdly, revitalisation of the church hierarchy through a new monastic framework. The first characteristic, synergy between authority and prayer, has been addressed when, in chapter two, "Klosterpolitik" was discussed. A few comments, though, are in order concerning the second strand, monastic topography and its connection to authority. For, although VIIth-century monastic foundations in Austrasia were vitally linked to the emergence of Pippinid authority, they appear nonetheless to have been rather a localised phenomenon. Already Ewig pointed out that the founding activities in the West of Austrasia, specifically within the diocese of Tongres-Maastricht, were not matched by similar activities in the Eastern dioceses (Cologne, Trier)[269] – that is, until the arrival of Willibrord and his founding of Echternach (698) on the land of Pippin II's mother-in-law.[270] Indeed, although there were VIIth-century foundations in the East – e.g. the Trier monastery of Oeren, founded in c. 640[271] – the imbalance between late VIIth-century monastic topography in the West of Austrasia and the relative lack of it in the East is suggestive of a fault line in Pippinid authority which was to be remedied only later – after

264 Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 77.

265 Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 65-90.

266 *Vita Berthuini*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM 7 (Hanover and Leipzig 1920) 175-182, c. 13. The description of Odacrus as a *princeps regis Pippini* is suspect, as Pippin was never a king and at the time – 651 – must have still been a boy.

267 *Vita Landelini*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM 6 (Hanover and Leipzig 1913) 433-444, and Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 91 ff.

268 Founding date of Lobbes: Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 94-95.

269 Ewig, *Frühes Mittelalter*, 70-71; also Van Vliet, *In kringen van kanunniken*, 39.

270 C. Wampach, 'Das Apostolat des hl. Willibrord in den Vorlanden der eigentlichen Frisia. Aktuelle Fragen um dessen räumliche Bestimmung, *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 155/156 (1954) 244-256 and J. Krier, 'Echternach und das Kloster des hl. Willibrords' in: A. Wieczorek, U. Koch and C. Braun ed., *Die Franken, Wegbereiter Europas. Vor 1500 Jahren König Chlodwig und seine Erben* (Mainz 1996) 466-478.

271 Werner, *Adelsfamilien*, 171-175.

Charles Martel subdued Plectrudis and her supporters when he took Cologne in 717 and Pippinids became Carolingians.[272] From then on, Carolingian "Klosterpolitik" led also to foundations further East (e.g. Prüm, 721, indirectly Lorsch, 764) and, parallel to this, the topography became Carolingian – or imperial – rather than Austrasian. It centered on Aachen and new foundations like Fulda. In fact, VIIth-century Austrasian topography of the sacred reflects a period in which Austrasian leaders were oriented towards Neustria rather than to their Eastern frontier – an orientation which also was to change with Charles Martel and his successors.

The third characteristic of Austrasian monastic policy, the revitalisation of the church hierarchy through a new monastic framework, shows a similar geographic fault line in that Western Austrasia in the VIIth century went through a development which was not matched in the Eastern parts, until the final emergence of Carolingian authority in the VIIIth century. In this case, it concerns bishops who were or became abbot.[273] We saw already the case of Amandus, who combined the office of bishop with being abbot at Elno.[274] Foilan and Ultan, who became abbots at Fosses, may have been *abbates-episcopi.*[275] At Lobbes there was an abbot-bishop from 680 onward.[276] Bertuinus of Malonne was a bishop.[277] The best-known case, of course, is Remaclus' combining the office of abbot and bishop at Stavelot-Malmédy.[278] What we see here looks like an effort to reconcile, within the context of the derelict diocese of Tongres-Maastricht, hierarchy with topography. In other words: to remedy the ecclesiastical unruliness of the area by founding monasteries while at the same time deploying a new type of bishops. The fact that Amandus could not hold his own as regular bishop of Maastricht as well as the murder of his two successors there (Theodardus, Lambertus[279]) once again makes clear that regular episcopal governance in the region was experiencing a tough time in the

272 *AMP* s.a. 717. See also W. Joch, 'Karl Martell. Ein minderberechtigter Erbe Pippins' in: J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter ed., *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen 1994) 149-169.

273 On the various modalities of "évêques claustraux" see Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 298. He distinguishes the episcopus ad praedicandum, the abbas-episcopus -, the "chor-évêque" and the bishop who was consecrated within the cadre of his monastery.

274 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 8 and *Vita Columbani*, prologue.

275 Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 295.

276 Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 91 ff and 290-291. Van Vliet, *In kringen van kanunniken*, 38 note 107. The author points out that there is a difference between the function of an *abbas-episcopus* (Lobbes, Stavelot-Malmédy) and of an *episcopus ad praedicandum* (Amandus in Elno and possibly Foilan and Ultan at Fosses).

277 Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 138-139.

278 *Vita Remacli*, c. 3 and 4.

279 Lambertus had been exiled from Maastricht and virtually imprisoned in Stavelot-Malmédy in the period of Ebroin's greatest power, 673-679. He had been recalled by Pippin (*Vita Landiberti Vetustissima*, c. 7).

later VIIth and early VIIIth century.[280] Possibly things improved after bishop Hubertus moved the seat of the diocese from Maastricht to Liège, closer to the power-base of Charles Martel.[281] Up to that time, at least, a network of monastic foundations, a number of those with their own abbot-bishops, provided an alternative structure to channel authority in North-western Austrasia.[282]

When, during the VIIIth century, the saintly legends were constructed which were discussed above, it came naturally to the legend constructors to describe the emergence of a monastic topography of the sacred in terms of a missionary effort. This tendency was strengthened by the fact that by the VIIIth century monasteries effectively were founded with missionary purpose in mind: St Peter at Salzburg (c. 700), Fulda (744), Werden (towards 800). To the narrators of Charlemagne's time it seemed that the monastic effort that had started with Amandus and Romaric had from the very beginning been a purposeful expression of a missionary intention. This perspective further encouraged them to (possibly unintentionally) reduce and belittle the autonomy and status of older forms of Christianity as these may have existed in Eastern parts of the Frankish Empire (Thuringia, Bavaria) before the days of Boniface. It thus made possible to retrospectively connect a strong – if somewhat artificial – missionary self-concept to a topography which was based on the ascetic virtuousness of earlier foundations in the wilderness of the Vosges or the Ardennes. It also made possible the exposition of coenobitic superiority as compared to more irregular, eremitic forms of monasticism which had been popular in earlier times and / or in more peripheral regions of the *Regnum Francorum*.

The resulting mix was a strong one. Its basic ingredient was the awareness of a realm where authority and correctness were disseminated through monastic foundations, which had rapidly increased in number and significance from the mid VIIth century onward. It included missionary sense and it connected regular prayer and praise of God with the

280 Of course it is possible that the other factors were at play, too. Amandus, who had advised Itta on Nivelles, could well have been seen as a partisan of her son Grimoald – prompting Sigebert III (or Grimoald's rivals) to support the episcopate of Remaclus at Stavelot-Malmédy. On VIIth- and early VIIIth-century Maastricht see Linssen, *Historische opstellen*, 82-138.

281 Werner, *Der Lütticher Raum*, 225. Possibly the change from Maastricht to Liège was rather unintentional. Lambertus had been recalled from his exile at Stavelot-Malmédy and settled himself at Liège, one of the alternative seats of the diocese. Years later he was murdered and subsequently buried there, whereupon a cult originated. His successor Hubert stimulated the cult and when he in his turn was buried at Liège the transition became final (Linssen, *Historische opstellen*, 88-90).

282 Cf Dierkens, *Abbayes et chapitres*, 286: "Le contexte particulier de l'Austrasie en générale, du diocèse de Maastricht-Liège et de l' entre Sambre-et-Meuse en particulier, conditionnera la nomination d' abbés favorables aux Pippinides et de la neutralisation du pouvoir épiscopal diocésain par le développement du système de l' abbé-évêque et de l' évêque de monastère".

authority of the king – emperor – who surrounded himself with abbots of prestigious foundations, where the Lives of saints were written in accordance with their ideology. Much of this had its origin in VIIth-century Austrasian monastic developments.

Section 5. Some conclusions on Austrasian identity and the sacred

The start of genuine missionary activity, intended to evangelise among the pagans (as it was defined and focussed by Wood in his book *The Missionary Life*[283]) beyond the borders of the *Regnum Francorum*, started rather later than hagiographic legend, composed in the VIIIth century, wanted its audience to believe. The activities undertaken from Luxeuil, by Agrestius, among the Bavarians in the 630's, cannot be proven to have been actual evangelizing.[284] At any case, the character of Agrestius' effort is not clear and it has left no traces in hagiographic legend.

In fact, there is no certain evidence indicating that Franks or Austrasians would have cared for, or been interested in, Frankish or Austrasian missionary activity or legend before c. 750 (of course there was the Anglo-Saxon mission since the 690's).

Things change from about 750 an later in the VIIIth century. The subsequent *Vitae* of Amandus ascribe missionary ambitions and activities to their protagonist, which however, fit ill what we know from other and more trustworthy sources about the saint's life.[285] Corroborative evidence is lacking. Arbeo, the biographer of Emmeram and Corbinian and as such indebted to the Live(s) of Amandus,[286] introduces missionary concepts in the Lives of these saints also, for which plausibility and probability are equally lacking. The same goes for the legend construction concerning Rupert.

These legends, which all have an Austrasian and/or Bavarian context, reflect an interest of their authors – and presumably their audiences – with missionary themes. They retrospectively attribute missionary ambitions to VIIth-century saints. The emergence of a missionary interest in the mid-VIIIth century may safely be connected to the officially stimulated and supported influx of Anglo-Saxon missionaries into

283 Wood, *The missionary life*. For his use of the concept " mission to the pagans" see p. 3.
284 *Vita Columbani*, II, c. 9; for argumentation: see section two, above.
285 *Vita Geretrudis*, *c.* 2; *Vita Columbani*, introduction; for argumentation, see section 3.2, above.
286 Wood, *The missionary life*, 58-65; for argumentation, see section 2, above.

Austrasia and the German lands to the East.[287] One thing we can conclude about Austrasian identity in the crucial mid-VIIIth century, at the time of the Carolingian take-over of kingship, is that the importance of the sacred, in relation to that identity, was rapidly increasing. This is strongly suggested by the legend construction crystallizing around saints active in Austrasia and the East. Next to the special characteristics of kingship in Austrasia (dealt with in the previous chapter), the specific Austrasian colouring of the sacred became formative of the Austrasian identity (which would soon itself dissolve into the wider self-awareness of a Carolingian imperial aristocracy). This identity was further flavoured by a particularly activist attitude of Austrasian aristocracy (to be discussed in the next chapter).

Within the conceptualisation of the sacred as part of Austrasian identity, the element of mission became important at a relatively late stage – later at least than we were made to believe by VIIIth-century hagiography (followed by many later historians).

It seems, then, that VIIth-century saints like Columbanus, Amandus, Rupert and others, while being anything but missionaries, yet purposefully became credited with missionary ambitions through VIIIth-century legend construction in a development which reflected the interest of an VIIIth-century audience.

In this long development toward a missionary consciousness the legend construction around saints operating in or from Austrasia provides one of the more fascinating elements of Austrasian identity. It may prove a field for fruitful further investigation, in which an analysis could be attempted of possible parallelisms between failing royal authority in the East after 639, the emergence of the Anglo-Saxon mission after c. 690 and the meaning of the "indigenous" missionary consciousness in constructed hagiographic legend.

Not only in the field of mission did legend construction shape Austrasians' relationship with the sacred. The narrative in Jonas of Bobbio's *Vita Columbani*, with its multi-layered account of the saint's relationship with various Merovingian kings,[288] contains assumptions on kingship which, partly through Fredegar and the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, gained familiarity in Austrasia.[289] These assumptions concerned the legitimacy of kings[290] (specifically in relation to their birth, a point that before Columbanus/Jonas was hardly grasped by the

287 See for a concise discussion of the complex relationship between church and Christianity in East of the Rhine Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 304-321.

288 *Vita Columbani,* I, c. 6, 18-20, 24 and 27-29.

289 Fredegarius, IV, c. 36; on the link between Fredegar/*Historia vel Gesta Francorum* and Austrasia see chapter four, section three.

290 *Vita Columbani,* I, c. 8-20; The sons of Theuderic II are said by Columbanus to have been begotten *e lupanaribus*.

promiscuous kings[291]), as well as the (dangers and) potentials for kings of (withholding) a *sapiens*' blessing.[292] Such newly conceived connections between the sacred and kingship contributed to the broader VIIth-century process mentioned earlier of kings moving into an ecclesiastical atmosphere.[293] Jonas' insistence on the power of prophecy[294] is also typical of this development. When, during the VIIth century, the concept of the *peregrinatio* became connected in Austrasia to the founding of monasteries sponsored by magnates and the (circles around) the king, the long pilgrimage of Columbanus as described by Jonas provided the format for other itinerant monastic founders[295] like Amandus, Foilan and Remaclus.

Concepts as used by Jonas in the VIIth century recur in the legend constructed in the VIIIth century about Amandus. Although it is doubtful whether the saint actually ever met Dagobert I,[296] his relationship c.q. confrontation with that king as described in the *Vita Prima*[297] is very reminiscent of the confrontation between Columbanus and Brunhild and Theuderic II. The legend constructor uses a similar format. The fictitious episode of Amandus lifting the child Sigebert III from the baptismal font (and the subsequent miracle)[298] is an exact opposite of Columbanus refusing to bless the sons of Theuderic II. It is essential for our understanding of Austrasian identity to be aware that both episodes are linked to an Austrasian context, the episode on Columbanus through its adoption by Fredegar and thence into the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, the Amandus legend through the time and place of its composition.

The strong and intensifying connection between Austrasians and the sacred, as it is suggested by purposeful legend construction and by the development of a sacred topography, is paralleled by a work of restoration of ecclesiastical governance structures.[299] This work of restoration was to a large degree carried by an Austrasian "Klosterpolitik" sponsored by kings, court and great families. The fact that, since the decay of royal authority in the East (after 639) and the end of a specific Austrasian kingship (679),

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291 Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 81: "Zur Thronfolge legitimierte ausschließlich die väterliche Abstammung; Stand und Herkunft der Mutter waren irrelevant, so daß auch Söhne von "Königinnen" unfreier Herkunft Anspruch auf den Thron hatten".

292 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 19 and 28.

293 Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic kingship*, 47.

294 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 19, 24 and 27,

295 *cf* Fredegarius, IV, c. 36: [Columbanus]... *in loco nomen Bobio illuc construens, sancte conuersationis, plenus dierum migrat ad Christum.*

296 This doubt seems justified considering the report given the *Vita Amandi I*, 13 on Amandus requesting the king for support through bishop Aigacharius of Noyon – as if he could not approach the king directly himself (In a similar way, it is doubtful whether Amandus ever met the pope or even went to Rome).

297 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 17 (Amandus reproaching the king on *capitalia crimina*).

298 Ibidem.

299 Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 112-116 and 133-138.

the Austrasian aristocratic leadership increasingly tended to get mixed up in Neustrian affairs and, to a degree, neglected – or had given up on – the East, is reflected in the fact that until deep into the VIIIth century Austrasian ecclesiastical topography mainly developed West of the Rhine. Here the *sedes regni*, monastic foundations and cult centres formed a topographical expression of the symbiosis between two main elements of Austrasian identity: idiosyncratic kingship and a specific relation with the sacred. The input into this blend of the third element, Austrasia's unruly aristocracy, is subject of the next chapter.

IV. Aristocrats and kingship

Section 1. Austrasians as a group

The origin of the names "Austrasia" and "Austrasians" is unclear and will probably remain so. An explanation proposed by Steinbach[1] has partial plausibility: we may accept that "Austrasia" contains a root signifying "East" and that the concept served to distinguish the Eastern "Teilreich" of the Frankish Kingdom from its Western part, Neustria.[2] This interpretation appears to be supported by the term *Osterliudi* as used in the *Annales Mettenses Priores*. The lack of a clear etymology for the name prevents us from attributing emotional value to the names "Austrasia" and "Austrasians". Although we may assume that – as far as the Eastern Franks themselves used the names – the connotation will have rather been a positive one, at the same time we have to accept that, in the narrative sources of the VIIth and VIIIth centuries, the names are applied to the Eastern Franks by outsiders writing about them. There are no instances in our sources of Eastern Franks referring to themselves or to their territory as "Austrasia" or "Austrasians". An exception is the reference to the *Osterliudi* in the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, which is clearly a self-referring term used by an Austrasian author.[3]

Yet an analysis of what the outsiders write on Austrasians and Austrasia is revealing of – at least – the contemporary views on the Eastern Franks and we have to work with the assumption that these views will reflect to a considerable degree the attitudes and (self)perceptions of the *Osterliudi* themselves. It is, therefore, helpful to have a closer look at what our narratives may teach us in this respect.

The Chronicle of Fredegar is a crucial source for approaching the concept of "Austrasians" and of "Austrasia". In the fourth book of the

1 F. Steinbach, 'Austrien und Neustrien. Die Anfänge der deutschen Volkwerdung und des deutsch-französischen Gegensatzes' [originally 1940] in: H. Eggers ed., *Der Volksname Deutsch* (Darmstadt 1970) 166-182. The text was originally published in 1940, a date which coloured Steinbach's interpretation.

2 We do not accept Steinbach's explanation of the name of "Neustria" as "the new kingdom", which would – in his view – imply that the Austrasians conceived of Neustria as a new c.q. "colonial" territory. Nor do we accept Steinbach's views of Austrasia's origins being linked to an alleged reversal in the process of romanisation of the Franks. These views are obviously determined by the context of 1940.

3 *AMP* 4. See also Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 330-349.

chronicle – not considering the *continuatio* – the names "Austrasians" and/or "Austrasia" are used forty-three times. It appears, therefore, that both designations, in the seventy years or so since the first mention of "Austrasians" by Gregory,[4] had become much more current.[5] In book IV are also regularly found the names "Neustrians" and "Neustria" – names referring to the North-western part of the *Regnum Francorum* and its inhabitants. However, Fredegar uses "Neustria" much less frequent than the names for the other territories. Judging from the frequency it seems that Fredegar had more to say about Austrasia (43 instances) and Burgundy (59 instances) than about Neustria (15 instances). In the following, I will deduce from Fredegar's text some characteristics of Austrasians as the author saw them.

Fredegar's view of the Austrasians

Fredegar calls Austrasians Austrasii (apart from spelling variations) and the word occurs never in singular: it always denotes a collectivity. An individual is never characterized as "an Austrasian". Austrasia as a territorial name is always given as *Auster*.

The following table presents the result of some simple inventarizing on the use of the designations *Austrasii* and *Auster* in book IV; it also differentiates according to context of use.

Frequency and contextual differentiation in the use of "Auster" and "Austrasii" in the fourth book of the Chronicle of Fredegar without its continuation(s)

	AUSTER (18 mentions)	*AUSTRASII* (25 mentions)
Linked with *regnum*, e.g. *Auster regnum*, *regnum Austrasiorum*	2 (*capita* 16, 43)	3 (capita 53a, 53b, 76c)
Linked to *regnare*, e.g. *utiliter regnarit in Auster*	3 (*capita* 38b, 52, 56a, 56b)	–
Linked to *rex*, e.g. *Dagobertus filium suum in Auster regem sublimauit*	2 (*capita* 59, 75a)	1 (*caput* 47)
Linked to an office in Austrasia, e.g. *(Dagobertus) Arnulfi … pontefice et Pippino maiorem domus usus … in Auster regebat*	2 (*capita* 1, 58)	1 (*caput* 88)
Linked to a political action of the Austrasians, e.g. *Austrasiorum omnes primati … sacramentis firmauerunt*	2 (*capita* 52, 85c)	6 (*capita* 19, 35b, 42b, 76a, 76e, 85a)
Linked to an expression of opinion, e.g. *zelus Austrasiorum*	1 (*caput* 85d)	5 (*capita* 35a, 61, 68c, 75b, 85b)
Linked to the army, e.g. *Austrasiorum exercitum*	1 (*caput* 38c)	8 (*capita* 37, 38a, 42a, 42b, 68a, 68b, 74, 87)
Linked to the territory, e.g. *quicquid ad regnum Aostrasiorum iam olem pertenerat*	5 (*capita* 40a, 40b, 54, 76b, 83)	1 (*caput* 76d)

4 *DLH*, V, c. 14.

5 In book IV the names "Burgundians" and "Burgundy" are about as frequent – which is also much more frequent, relatively, than in Gregory's Histories.

In Fredegar's book IV the designation "Austrasians", denoting a collectivity, is rather more frequent than the territorial designation "Austrasia" (The ration being 25 to 18). The designation "Austrasians" is, in 19 cases, found linked to a) political action or kingship, b) expressions of opinion and c) the army. In other words: Fredegar's narrative suggests a link between the use of "Austrasians", on the one hand, and Eastern Frankish magnates undertaking political action, applying political pressure, consenting with or opposing some action, or fighting in the army, on the other hand. The fact that Fredegar tended to designate specifically such activist collectivities in the East as "Austrasians" presumably reflects the group dynamics of VIIth-century power relations. Moreover, of the nine instances linked to the army, eight refer to *Austrasii* – to the collectivity. This suggests that the name *Austrasii* primarily designated a military elite within the Eastern kingdom, or that *austrasitas* was considered to be expressed when the duty or obligation to defend or support the collectivity was fulfilled.

In Fredegar's narrative, the collectivity of the "Austrasians" is in a number of cases linked to the concept of regnum or to the territorial designation *Auster*. In relation to *regnum* the name *Auster* occurs two times, the name *Austrasii* occurs three times. Thus, at the time when Fredegar was writing, a kingdom could be conceived of in territorial terms – but it was at least as common to link a kingdom to its leading collectivity.

More may be learned from Fredegar about *Auster*. Earlier, we noted how he praised young Dagobert I for his "prosperous royal rule" of Austrasia through which he "earned unlimited praise of all peoples".[6] Here Auster is depicted as a territory which is being "royally ruled" and which comprises a number of peoples – *gentes*, a term which in the VIIth century almost always means pagans. Fredegar offers more information on *Auster*. At the occasion of the "official" confirmation of the Austrasia's status as a separate *regnum* in 633, where it was established, among other things, that after Dagobert's eventual death the succession in Neustria and Austrasia was to be dealt with separately, Fredegar presents a brief comparison of Neustria, Burgundy and Austrasia by which he makes clear that he considers Austrasia in terms of land area and of population more or less equal to Neustria and Burgundy.[7] This statement completes the "emancipation" of the *regnum* Austrasia as compared to the two other *regni*. For good order: the *Austrasii* as a collectivity had been manifest already a long time by then.

6 Fredegarius, IV, c. 58; *[Dagobertus] … tante prosperitatis regale regimen in Auster regebat ut a cunctis gentibus … laudem habuerit.*

7 Fredegarius, IV, c. 76; "*…ut Neptreco et Burgundia … ad regnum Chlodouiae … adspecerit; Aoster vero … et de populo et de spacium terre coaequans, ad regnum Sigyberti …*

The Liber Historiae Francorum and the Annales Mettenses Priores about the Austrasians

The Austrasian élite was jealous of its privileges and its influence. Their pride and autonomy reflect also in the Neustrian narrative we know as the *Liber Historiae Francorum.* At the occasion of Dagobert I's installation to (co-)kingship in the East, its narrative mentions how "the Austrasians, who are actually the Upper Franks, came together and set up Dagobert as king over themselves."[8] The work being composed two generations after Fredegar (and almost a century after Dagobert I's installation in Austrasia), we may learn two things from this passage. First, that in the first half of the VIIIth century the name "Austrasians" still designated the Eastern élite, although a Neustrian writer thought fit to add the obviously Neustrian clarification *Franci Superiores*, thus at least suggesting that *Austrasii* was, indeed, the term used by the Easterners themselves. Second, that in a staunchly Neustrian work like the *Liber Historiae Francorum* the author did not even try to gloss over the fact that it was emphatically the Austrasian magnates who had insisted on and in the end gotten their own king – whom they installed themselves, *congregati in unum*.

In the beginning of the IXth century the author of the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, looking back at the beginnings of Pippinid fortunes, highlights the accession of Pippin II to the leadership of the Eastern Franks, "whom in their own language they call *Osterliudos*".[9] As the new leader of the "Eastern people" (Austrasians?) Pippin knew what was expected of him: according to the Annales' author, a monk at Metz, he immediately set out to subjugate *Suavos et Baiowarios et Saxones*. The passage closely connects the *Osterliudi* to a paradigm of war and conquest.

In all, our narrative sources present us with a clear image of the Austrasian aristocrats as they were seen – and presumably saw themselves – in the period between c. 600 and c. 800. They formed a large group of magnates, a group which – despite its often vehement internal divisions and conflicts – had enough in common to justify a specific name, *Austrasii*. This name, which began to be used c. 590 and continued to be used until well into the VIIIth century,[10] denoted the (military) élite of the Eastern Franks. The territorial denomination "Austrasia" (*Auster*) was probably a derivation from the group-name. The group, comprizing most if not all Eastern magnates, manifested itself specifically on matters concerning kingship, the army and "political" expression. It could be very vociferous. In chapter one it was already shown how possessive

8 *LHF*, c. 41; *Austrasii vero Franci Superiores congregati in unum, Dagobertum super se regem statuunt.*

9 *AMP*, 4; *quos illi propria lingua Osterliudos vocant.*

10 *Annales Regni Francorum*, *s.a.* 778, and *AMP*, 20, 21 and 32 (written c. 805) are the last instances I have found.

the Austrasian aristocrats were with regard to the territorial integrity of Austrasia.[11]
In this chapter, the Austrasian élite will be studied from various other perspectives. Section two will analyze the significance of the late VIIIth-century *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* – as it was recently "reconstructed" by Collins[12] – for our understanding of Austrasian aristocrats. Sections three and four will give instances of how Austrasian aristocrats influenced politics and attempted to set kings to their hands. Throughout the sections, we will address the possible group identity of the *Austrasii*, as well as group codes they may have adhered to.

Section 2. The Historia vel Gesta Francorum

The sponsors of the Historia vel Gesta Francorum – and their perspective
Towards the middle of the VIIIth century, a certain Childebrand sponsored an ambitious historiographical project. Childebrand was a kinsman of Pippin the Short, mayor of the palace of the *Regnum Francorum*.[13] It also makes him a highly ranking Austrasian aristocrat. The project he sponsored was the composition of a substantial chronicle, a *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*,[14] which in fact consisted of a reshuffled version of Fredegar's Chronicle – by then almost a century old – supplemented by various texts, most notably a *Continuatio* dealing with the period from c. 650 onward up to the days of Childebert and his son Nibelung. The latter saw the work's completion, with its report on the accession of Charlemagne and his brother Carloman in 768.[15]
It is the merit of Collins[16] that the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* may now be recognised as a work in its own right, distinct from the Chronicle of Fredegar – even if ninety-five percent of the Historia's content is identical to the Chronicle's. Yet already Wallace-Hadrill recognised that Childebrand's undertaking had led to a "revised text of Fredegar".[17] In his words: "Count Childebrand must be held responsible for what was done in his name in 751/2: a text of Fredegar is found and revised (presumably

11 On the development of early Frankish aristocracy see F. Irsigler, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des frühfränkischen Adels* (Bonn 1969).
12 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*.
13 Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes* c. 34; Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 5; L. Levillain, 'Les Nibelungen historiques et leurs alliances de famille', *Annales du Midi* 49 (1937) 337-407.
14 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 5.
15 Dated but still useful on Childebrand and Nibeliung: Levillain, 'Les Nibelungen'.
16 ollins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*.
17 Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar*, XXVI.

in Austrasia) to suit his taste ...".[18] To this "taste" we will return. On the regional colour of the work, Austrasian or otherwise, we must also heed Collins. He not only recognised that Childebrand's (and Nibelung's) initiative led to an essentially different and new work, but he also succeeded in placing the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* in its context. Collins sees the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* as a strongly pro-Carolingian work, probably written as a dedication to the first Carolingian king, Pippin, at the occasion of his accession to the throne in 751.[19] This is a very plausible view. Yet we may find more in the work than just the praise of the Carolingians. The *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* was commissioned by Pippin's relatives. They were, of course, magnates with a strong Austrasian orientation and they instilled an aristocrat's view into the text. The sponsor Childebrand did not forget himself. He appears twice in the *continuatio's* narrative:[20] Childebrand has himself portrayed as a military leader, *a dux, a vir industrius*[21] – *industrius* being a word rarely used in connection with an aristocratic leader,[22] meaning "diligent". In the so-called "colophon" of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*[23] his son Nibelung styles both his father and himself as *vir inluster*. This then was the way in which these high aristocrats choose to see themselves: as military leaders, as men of diligence, and as illustrious men to be denoted by the Roman term *vir illuster*. This self-perception of the book's sponsors is complemented by notions from the narrative itself which indicate aristocratic perspectives and which presumably are in accordance with the sponsors' tastes. There is a suggestion that the sponsors felt rather detached with reference to the position of bishops: in the first ten capita of the *continuatio*, which are based on the corresponding chapters of the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, on two occasions LHF-references to Audoin of Rouen have been left out of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*.[24] Also in this part of the narrative, LHF-references which could be interpreted as denigrating for kingship are omitted, even though the expunged passages concern Merovingians and not Carolingians: no mention is made of the capture of Theuderic III by Ebroin[25] and neither is the *Liber Historiae Francorum*'s report repeated that king Chilperic II had been

18 Ibidem.

19 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, c. 93: "Ein im Ursprung zum Ruhm der neuen karolingische Dynastie gedachtes Werk, möglicherweise vorgesehen zur Widmung an deren ersten König ...".

20 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 20 and 21.

21 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 20.

22 Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* has no lemma for it.

23 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 34.

24 Compare *LHF* c. 45 and c. 47 to *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 2 and c. 4, respectively. Specifically the omission of Audoin's counsel to Ebroin is conspicuous, because thus the narrative is bereft of an episode of considerable suspense and consequence.

25 Compare *LHF* c. 45 to *HGF*(= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 2.

a cleric named Daniel before his accession to the kingship.[26] From the comparison between the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and the first ten chapters of the *Historiae vel Gesta Francorum* it also appears that armed strife between the Franks was deemed highly undesirable by the authors of the latter. Concerning the origin of the armed conflict following the death of Pippin of Herstal, the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* refers to "unhelpful council" as a major cause,[27] leaving unanswered the question whose bad council led to the war: obviously civil strife is considered bad as such.[28] The resulting picture we get of the HGF's perspective on aristocratic values may be summarised as follows: aristocrats are militarily active and they are diligent. They feel aloof of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. They respect kingship – maybe to the extent that they value the institution even more than they revere its actual holder. And they have an aversion from civil strife. They are well aware of their position within the kingdom. When the HGF describes how the Lombard king Aistulf pledged an oath of loyalty to king Pippin, it explicitly mentions that the oath was sworn to the king and his magnates (*proceres*).[29]

The Austrasian perspective of the Historia vel Gesta Francorum

But were the HGF's sponsors, Childebrand and Nibelung, Austrasians? In all probability, they were active in many parts of the *Regnum Francorum* and more so in the West and South than in the East and North – witness the reports of Childebrand's military activities in Aquitaine and Burgundy. Also, their territorial base seems to have included possessions in Neustria: possibly near Melun,[30] which would put them close to Austrasia, while others mention the Vexin.[31] Yet it is clear that they, being sprung from the Austrasian mayoral family, had a strong Austrasian slant. Conversely, their involvement with many parts of the realm was illustrative of a period in which Austrasian influences, following the new gradients of power developing after Tertry, spread more and more beyond the Austrasian borders. Be that as it may, the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* displays a strong Austrasian orientation – much stronger than is allowed for by Collins. Collins suggests, on codicological grounds, a

26 Compare *LHF* c. 52 to *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 9.

27 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 8, *... concilio inutile accepto ...*

28 The *LHF* has the expression *instigante diabulo* in its report on the origins of the conflict. This was not adopted by the *HGF*'s author. But instead of omitting a normative statement altogether, he chose to include the reference to unhelpful council. Obviously he felt that some kind of judgment on the matter was in order.

29 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 38, *Sacramenta ... donat, ut amplius numquam contra rege Pippino uel proceris Francorum rebellis contumax esse non debeat ...*

30 Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar,* XXVI.

31 Medieval Lands Project: Carolingian Nobility – Families of Nibelung, Childebrand and Theoderic. http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/FRANKISH%20NOBILITY.htm#_Toc143595867

possible origin of the work's 751-version in South-West Germany or the Bodensee region.[32] Also he points out that the final parts of the work, referring to the years 753-768, are rather more informative on Northern Aquitaine and Western Burgundy than on the Rhineland or the lands East of the Rhine.[33] He is right in both respects – yet he also points out that these observations are not conclusive on the question from what geographical – or mental – position the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* was written. And there are also elements in the narrative which suggest an involvement of the sponsors, and/or of the author they commissioned, with Austrasia. When we once more compare the first ten capita of the *Continuatio* to the corresponding chapters in the Liber Historiae Francorum we find some clear examples. In reporting on the outcome of the battle at Lucofao the Liber Historiae Francorum mentions the "Austrasians" flying after their defeat, whereas the author of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* leaves out the name "Austrasians".[34] The same author mentions the attack of Ghislemar on Namur, which the *Liber Historiae Francorum* does not report at all.[35] Also, he provides his readers with the names of those Neustrians who fled to Pippin preceding Tertry and besides he emphasises that it was the "Austrasians" who won that battle – left out in the *Liber Historiae Francorum*.[36] The author of *the Historia vel Gesta Francorum* has other Austrasian details for us, as compared to the *Liber Historiae Francorum*. In his account on the war with Radbod he mentions Dorestad and calls Radbod a "Frisian".[37] Also, he tells his readers that Drogo was buried at St Arnulf's in Metz[38] and that the dying Pippin lay ill at Jupille.[39] In the later capita of the *Continuatio*, which do not have the *Liber Historiae Francorum* as their example, we find five reports on consecutive conflicts with the Saxons[40] and one of conflict with Frisia,[41] which neatly balances the six reports on conflicts in Southern Germany with Alamans, Sueves and/or Bavarians.[42] Here, too, it is clear that the author was well informed about Austrasian topography: he knows about the Boorne and Oostergo and Westergo in Frisia,[43] about the Lippe on the marches of Saxony[44] and on the strategic position of Bonn as a

32 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*. 89-90.
33 Ibidem, 90-91.
34 Compare *LHF*, c. 46 to *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 3.
35 Compare *LHF* c. 47 to *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 4.
36 Compare *LHF* c. 48 to *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 5.
37 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 6.
38 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 6 and 7.
39 Ibidem.
40 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 11, 19, 27, 31 and 35.
41 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 17.
42 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 12, 23, 25, 26, 29 and 32.
43 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 17.
44 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 19.

depot when waging war with the Saxons.[45] He tells us about Carloman gaining power in *Auster*, his account distinguishing between Alemannia and Thuringia.[46] In his narrative he has rather precise references to the Austrasian royal seats Thionville[47] and Metz,[48] both on the Moselle. All in all, a case could be made for the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* having been written in Austrasia, perhaps in the Moselle region. The plausibility of such a case is comparable to the propositions of Collins, who rather favours South-Western Germany or the Burgundian region. In this context, it should be considered that in the *Continuatio* the terms "Austrasia" or "Austrasians" are used less frequently than in the Fourth Book of Fredegar: 10 references in 54 chapters, as against 43 mentions in 90 chapters (see above, section 1). This probably reflects the decreasing familiarity and use of the name in the second half of the VIIIth century. Nonetheless, when the author reports what part of Pippin's heritage Charlemagne received in 768, he refers to the *Austrasiorum Regnum*.[49]

An aristocratic Origo Francorum

There is yet another perspective which is characteristic of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* – and this follows from the work's emphasis on the – alleged – origin of the Franks. Already in the 650's the "original" Fredegar had shown interest in a pretended Trojan origin of the Franks,[50] possibly taking his clue from a by then misunderstood Roman diplomatic practice of honouring allies by naming them "brothers" of the Romans.[51] Remarkably the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (c. 727), too, knows a Trojan tradition, but this differs markedly from Fredegar's.[52] Whereas Fredegar reports a migration history leading the Franks' ancestors from Troy to the Rhine mainly led by *duces* (after a king Francio had died, that is),[53] the *Liber Historiae Francorum* is more specific and constructs a (migration) history which leads up to Pharamond, first of the *reges crinites*.[54] It is striking that the author of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, although he borrowed extensively from the *Liber Historiae Francorum* on VIIth- and VIIIth-century history, did prefer Fredegar's version of the Trojan legend to the version

45 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 35.
46 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 23.
47 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 36: *Per Ardinna silua ipse rex ueniens (from Bonn) et Theudone uila publica super Mosella resedisset.*
48 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 51: Metz as winterquarters and as city where king Pippin ordered a Saracen embassy to await his summons during the winter of 767/768.
49 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 53.
50 Fredegarius, II, c. 4-6 and 8-9.
51 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 33-35.
52 *LHF*, c. 1-5.
53 Fredegarius, II, c. 4-6.
54 *LHF*, c. 1-5.

of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* – as if he had more use for a past with *duces* than for a past with Pharamond. It was Fredegar's original text which he maintained in book II of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*. In addition, he included into his work the *Historia Daretis Phrygii de Origine Francorum*,[55] which constitutes in fact a reworked version of the VIth-century *Historia de Excidio Troiae*.[56] The main adaptation of this text consists of a report on the descendants of a certain Frankish leader Pherecides, otherwise unaccounted for. His son Frigio (II) allegedly ruled the Franks for 63 years, after which he was succeeded by his sons Franco and Vasso.[57] They are depicted as belligerent leaders, also fighting each other if things turned out that way. They are not named kings. Frigio's rule is called a *principatum*.[58] In general, the author of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* derives from (or puts into) the Trojan legend an emphasis on aristocratic rather than royal rule (*duces, principatum*) and elements of an "Ahnenreihe"[59] comparable to the legendary descent of the Romans from Aeneas. What we have here, then, is an *Origo Francorum* with a strong Austrasian slant, emphasizing the preponderance of aristocratic and military virtues.

In all, then, the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* provides a perspective which is at least partly Austrasian – not only in its pro-Carolingian attitude, but also and specifically in its aristocratic outlook. The sponsors of the work, Childebrand and Nibelung, were kinsmen of the first Carolingian king – but they had known and respected him before he assumed the crown and it appears possible that they honoured him primarily as their princeps rather than as their king. This presumably reflects a more general attitude of Austrasian aristocrats. They respected kingship, but they remained jealous of their prerogatives. They saw themselves as military leaders and as *viri inlustri* – in addition to which they asserted (and depicted) themselves as *viri industrii*. They preferred to remain aloof of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and they disapproved of civil strife (without abjuring it altogether). Also, they had a certain ethnic

55 *Historia Daretis Frigii de origine Francorum*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 194-200.

56 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 83-85. Collins, though concluding that it is remarkable that the *HGF*'s author reworked this text so much more extensively than he did with his other source material, yet accepts that this version was prepared specifically for the *HGF*.

57 The names may have been suggestive to the *HGF*-audience: a free "Frank" and a "vassal". But there is no way to conclude whether such overtones were indeed there.

58 *Adeo ad Pherecides indolem prepropere revertamur. Pherecides genuit alium Frigionem. Idem Frigio solertissimus in robore armatoria extetit, annos 63 principatum gentis suae rexit. Belligerator valedissimus cum vicinis regionibus demicans, usque Dalmaciae fines proeliando vastavit. Qui Frigio genuit Franco et Vasso elegantissimis pueris adque efficaces. Defuncto igitur Frigione iuniore, genitore eorum, itidem germani tirannidem mutuo arripiunt; arma bellica instanter sumentes, ad aciem sevissime nimia agilitate proritant.* (*Historia Daretis Frigii*).

59 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 84.

consciousness, Austrasian or Frankish, which they liked to see reflected in an *Origo Francorum*.

Section 3. Austrasians as a politically active group

A history of self-consciousness

As we saw, Fredegar depicted Austrasians as regularly asserting themselves through political action, through pressure and through using their control of the army. Obviously, when Fredegar wrote about "Austrasians", he was thinking about influential men. They were also committed to Austrasia's territorial integrity (if only because they owned land themselves in Austrasian territories), which suggests a certain regional "awareness". The *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* adds a distinct aristocratic flavour to this. It shows a self-conscious group which remained jealous of its prerogatives – also when dealing with the king and kingship. In this section we will look at the way in which the aristocratic activism of the Austrasians worked out in political reality.

A first observation may be that activism had a long history among the Eastern Franks. Already Theuderic I had to give in to his soldiers when, in 524, they forced him to go to war to satisfy their desire for conquest and booty.[60] This was a situation which reminds one of "Heerkönigtum" and affords a glimpse of activist Austrasians in a more primitive stage, so to speak. Some sixty years later things appear to have become somewhat more sophisticated. The planned coup of duke Rauching in 587 is supported by Austrasians who (or whose leaders) are no mere "soldiers": Ursio, Berthefried an bishop Aegidius of Reims followed Rauching, who purported to be a son of the late Chlothar I. The kings Guntram and Childebert II had a hard time in defeating the aristocratic uprising.[61] In these and similar cases, aristocratic self-consciousness of the Eastern Frankish magnates appears to have defined itself through kinship – pretended or real – with the royal clan. This is seen in the claim of Munderic in the early 530's.[62] Like Rauching, he claimed to be of royal blood. And then there was the Gundovald affair. Gundovald was no Austrasian and he may well have been whom he claimed to be: an unrecognised son of Chlothar I. Fact is, that he was invited in the 580's by a large and influential group of Austrasian magnates to become their king

60 *DLH*, III, c. 11.
61 *DLH*, IX c. 9, 12, 14 and Fredegarius, c. IV, 8.
62 *DLH*, III, c. 14.

and depose Childebert II.[63] Rather than the actual course of affairs, what is important in this episode is how Austrasian aristocrats, as a matter of course, thought they could decide whom to have for their king.
We may discern a development within the activism of the Eastern Franks. In the 520's they clamoured for war and booty. In the 580's they tried to determine who would be king. This development continued throughout the VIIth and VIIIth centuries. Fredegar mentions the gathering of the Franks which was to convene to settle Austrasian affairs – presumably including kingship – in the wake of the upheaval of 612/13. Parallel to the increasingly effective activism of the Austrasians there is an increasingly expressive self-awareness, witness the strong emphasis on the Frankish *origo* in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* as compared to the original chronicle of Fredegar.

Arnulf and Romaric

The career of Arnulf of Metz is clarifying for the way in which individual Frankish aristocrats could function and grow within these activist dynamics and influence them in their own turn.[64] Arnulf was born c. 580 from a family who probably possessed landed wealth in the Moselle region near Metz.[65] As an adolescent he became a trainee with Gundulf, who had started out as a domesticus of the king, subsequently became a dux and, ultimately, mayor of the palace.[66] Arnulf became, when still a very young man, a member of the personal entourage of king Theudebert II of Austrasia and the *Vita* hints at successful military action, probably against heathen peoples beyond the Rhine.[67] Arnulf married and fathered two sons.[68] He was made bishop of Metz, doubtlessly by king Theudebert II, in 611 or early 612.[69]
During the upheaval of 612/613 it was Arnulf who, together with Pippin and other Austrasian magnates – not necessarily all of them – invited

63 *DLH*, VII, c. 32 and 36 and Fredegarius, III, c. 89.
64 Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon (BBKL), author Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz: Arnulf, Bischof von Metz, Heiliger. Hamm 1975. 2., unveränderte Auflage Hamm 1990, Band I Sp. 246–247.
65 It seems possible that the settlements of Dodigny and Chaucy were family possessions. *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 1, 15.
66 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 3. Probably this is the same Gundulf who was related to the mother of Gregory of Tours and who visited Gregory in the year 581, *DLH*, VI, c. 11.
67 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 4 ... *phalangas adversarum gencium* ...
68 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 5. According to Paul the Deacon the sons were named Ansegisel and Chlodulf. I do not feel that Paul's late report provides conclusive evidence to make Arnulf, through a son allegedly called Ansegisel, a forebear of the Carolingians.
69 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 7. It is not explicitly said at when and by whom Arnulf was made bishop. Yet the *Vita* says that he was a *domesticus* and a counselor of the king when he became bishop. This strongly suggests the final phase of his career with Theudebert II, so he will have been made bishop by this king in 611 or early 612.

Chlothar II of Neustria into Austrasia.[70] In 622/623 Chlothar made his son Dagobert I *consors regni* in Austrasia.[71] Arnulf gained a position of high trust, at least with Chlothar if not with his son: "Chlotharius had given him into his hands a kingdom to govern and a son to educate".[72] There are indications that the bishop may have not been very intimate with the young king.[73] Arnulf certainly used his position. Together with Pippin he managed to set Dagobert against the Agilolfing magnate Chrodoald and in the end the *beatus pontifex* condoned (at least) in the latter's murder. This, of course, is found in Fredegar,[74] not in the *Vita*.

Was Arnulf ever a mayor of the palace in Austrasia? In chapter 52 of his Fourth Book Fredegar, referring to both Pippin and Arnulf, speaks of *maiores domus* – plural.[75] Fredegar reports that Arnulf, in 625, became one of the episcopal members of a commission of twelve high-raking Franks – both bishops and worldly magnates – who brought about a reconciliation between Chlothar and Dagobert regarding territorial disputes between Austrasia and Neustria (see section two).[76] Also other passages in his Chronicle show that Fredegar thinks highly of Arnulf.[77]

In 629 Arnulf became a hermit in the Vosges, like a "new Elias", as we saw already above.[78] He died c. 640.

Arnulf is both typical and atypical of Austrasian aristocrats. He is typical in that he is assertive, career-oriented (cf the *industrius* of Childebrand), close to the king and more attached to kingship than to a specific king's person: as long as he has a king within his reach who will listen to his councils he is satisfied. All the same, he appears to have been closer to Chlothar than to Dagobert. The atypical element in Arnulf's profile is his becoming a bishop – a characteristic he shares with Chunibert. In the later VIIth and VIIIth centuries there were to be no bishops among Austrasian powerbrokers.

Yet the early VIIth century brought about something like a religious watershed in the development of the Austrasian aristocrats' activism.

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70 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40.

71 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 47.

72 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 16. *Chlotharius eidem regnum ad gubernandum et filium erudiendum in manu tradidisset.*

73 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 12. While once travelling through Thuringia, the king did not wait for Arnulf when departing from Noddino's village. *Vita Arnulfi* , c. 16-20 report a stormy conflict between Dagobert I and Arnulf, leading up to the latter's withdrawal into heremetical life.

74 Fredegarius, IV, c. 52.

75 There is also a passage in the late *Vita Landiberti* of Sigebert of Gembloux which makes Arnulf mayor of the palace: *Vita Landiberti episcopi Traiectensis auctore Sigeberto*, MGH SSRM 6 (Hanover and Leipzig 1913), 393-406. c. 16

76 Fredegarius, IV, c. 53. Unfortunately we do not know the names of any of the other eleven members of the commission.

77 Arnulf is the only bishop whom Fredegar calls *beat(issim)us* and which he directly links to *sanctitas* four times; Fredegarius, IV, c. 52, 53; twice in c. 58.

78 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 20 and 21.

This is suggested by the career of Arnulf, who ended up as a hermit. It is also strongly suggested by the career of his friend Romaric, another Austrasian aristocrat. Romaric was born about 590. Already as a young man, he had connections to the court (*palacio*) of Theudebert II (596-612), as had his parents.[79] In 612 king Theudebert was vanquished and killed by his brother, Theuderic II. Romaric's father was murdered, too, his possessions being forfeited. According to the Vita, Romaric went as a supplicant to the court at Metz, but his pleading was rejected by queen Brunhild and bishop Aridius of Lyons, who had accompanied her there from Burgundy. Immediately afterwards, however, king Theuderic II died. The narrative suggests that this was a divine punishment, resulting from Romaric's fervent prayer. Subsequently, Romaric had his father's goods restored to him, and he facilitated the precipitate departure of Brunhild, Aridius (and presumably young Sigebert II) from Metz (613).[80] Under Chlothar, Romaric acquired high status at court.[81] However, when Romaric met the Burgundian monk Amatus he was induced by him to give up his wealth and exchange his courtier's life for a monastic existence at Luxeuil. Next Amatus and Romaric founded the monastery which in later years became known as *Romarici Mons*, Remiremont.[82] We have seen in chapter two that Romaric had direct access to Grimoald, the *princeps palacium* and was possibly consulted by him on matters of state.[83] Romaric is atypical for an Austrasian power broker in that he is also an abbot (in the sense that Arnulf was atypical as political leader because he was also a bishop). However, the combination of political leadership and the function of abbot would be seen rather often in Carolingian times.

The most important source on Romaric is his *Vita*. This *Vita Romarici* is probably an Austrasian text, dating from the second half of the VIIth

79 *Vita Romarici*, c. 2.

80 *Vita Romarici*, c. 3; (Krusch' introduction p. 212:) *Fugae Brunichildis cum Aridio … nemo praeterea mentionem fecit eamque confictam esse patet per se*. There is, however, no justification for the doubt Krusch expresses on the validity of the account of Brunhild and Aridius staying at Metz and later, after the sudden death of Theuderic II, fleeing the city. In fact, Krusch proposes no real argument why this episode would be fictional. It appears, objectively considered, very plausible that things happened as described by Romaric's biographer.

81 *Vita Romarici*, c. 4: *… in Lotharii regis palatio inter ceteros electus haberetur.*

82 *Vita Romarici*, c. 6. M. Parisse, 'Remiremont', in: Höfe und Residenzen im spätmittelalterlichen Reich. Ein dynastisch-topographisches Handbuch (Residenzenforschung, Band 15.1, 2003) 722/723.

83 *Vita Romarici*, c. 8.

century.[84] It is interesting to see what the text suggests on the relationship between an aristocrat like Romaric and consecutive kings. The narrative has Theuderic II die after he refuses the restitution of Romaric's paternal inheritance. It also has Brunhild take young Sigebert II away, with the support of Romaric: obviously he had no use for kings who were under someone else's influence. To Chlothar II Romaric relates quite differently: this king had been invited by the aristocrats Arnulf and Pippin, and Romaric, too, found himself a niche at Chlothar's court. Aristocrats profit when they serve a proper king.
But things go further than that.

Pippin of Landen
In the case of Pippin of Landen, we see an aristocrat filling in the gap left by an inept king, in this case Dagobert I.
At least, this is the way in which Fredegar describes Pippin's actions, warming up to his story as things go along. The earliest mentions of Pippin in Fredegar's Fourth Book are only brief ones, without much enthusiasm and in one case with a slightly negative connotation.[85] However, in caput 61 Pippin is honoured with a resounding introduction, being contrasted with Dagobert's "debauchery" (*luxoriam*) on the one hand and linked to the baptism of Sigebert III on the other, and at the same time being presented with the utmost praise: "... Pippin, of all men the most careful, a true counsellor, a man of unshakable fidelity and beloved of all for that passion for justice that he had prudently

84 The "Austrasianness" of the Vita Romarici is suggested by the relationship between the *Vita Arnulfi* and the *Vita Romarici*, a relationship which Wood points out, although he characterises it as "extremely problematical". Wood, 'Forgery in Merovingian hagiography', 370-371. One of the indications of this relationship is the fact that both texts use the rare word *subregulus* to indicate the mayor of the palace. The *Vita Arnulfi* is knowledgeable on Austrasia: on topography (*passim*), on concepts like *nacio Secambrorum* (c. 16) and on Austrasian notables like Goeric and Hugus (c. 14, 19 and 23). This makes it probable that the *Vita Romarici* is also of Austrasian provenance. Concerning the time of origin it is to be observed that the *Vita Romarici* is linked to the Vita Amati, both codicologically as well as in content. Codicologocally, in that in all known manuscripts the two *Vitae* are coupled (Krusch' introduction, 213/14). In content, in that both *Vitae* carefully leave out references to the adversities wich occurred to Remiremont in connection to the Agrestius affair (c. 625). Now in the Vita Amati the mention of pope Leo I's so-called "Flavian letter" suggests a dating not too long after this same affair. Wood, 'Forgery in Merovingian hagiography', 370-371.

85 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40 reports quite neutrally that Pippin and Arnulf (leaders of a faction) together with other magnates incited Chlothar in 613 to enter Austrasia. *Caput* 58 is still neutral ("Pippin, mayor of the palace"), but indicates that, while advised by Arnulf and Pippin, Dagobert ruled "prosperously" and "happily". *Caput* 52 is in essence negative on Pippin. Fredegar names him, together with Arnulf, as a cause of the disgrace and the subsequent murder of Chrodoald. And he does so using the word which he also used to indicate Brunhild's using her influence: *instigans*.

instilled into Dagobert in the days when the king used to listen to him".[86] The episode is linked to Dagobert's departure from Austrasia after he succeeded his father and settled in the Île de France, moving out of the Austrasians' sphere of control and obliging Pippin to try and keep together things in the East. In a sense Pippin had to fill the gap left by Dagobert. However, the Austrasian magnates at the time (c. 630) were in no mood to allow so much power to one of their own and Fredegar reports how "the wrath of the Austrasians was thoroughly roused against him".[87] What we have here is a provisional and disputed leadership assumed by Pippin at a time when royal leadership fell short of Austrasian expectations. It is important to realize that Fredegar wrote in the 650's about this remarkable role for Pippin, at a time when he and his intended audience could not be aware of the fact that Pippin's position in c. 630 foreshadows the position of Austrasian powerbrokers of the later VIIth and VIIIth century, Pippinid, Carolingian and others, *e.g.* Vulfoald. This kind of power is of an Austrasian brand. Pippin was the first Austrasian to achieve this kind of eminence: we do not find any magnates in a similar position before him. Men like Rauching, Ursio and Berthefried had been of quite a different calibre. Mark Fredegar describing – in the 650's, long before anything like a Pippinid-Carolingian "cult" had arisen – the Austrasian sentiment following Pippin's death in 640: "His death was a matter of deep grief to all Austrasians, who loved him for his concern for justice and goodness".[88] Forgotten was the *zelus Austrasiorum*. Some 150 years after Fredegar wrote on Pippin, the author of the Annales Mettenses Priores echoes the sense of wonder at Pippin's exalted position: "(the) most excellent Pippin, who with just laws governed the population living in the vast territories between the Forest of Charbonnière and the river Meuse up to the borders of the Frisians".[89] Neustrians were rather more sceptical of the kind of authority of Pippin or Grimoald, witness the peremptory comment on Grimoald's end in the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (Neustria 727): "In the city of Paris he was put in prison bound with painful chains as one worthy of death because he had acted

86 Fredegarius, IV, c. 60, 61 and 62; see specifically c. 61: *... Peppinus ... esset cautior cunctis et consiliosus ualde, plenissemus fide, ab omnibus delictus pro iustitiae amorem, quam Dagoberti consiliose instruxerat dum suo erat usus fuerat consilio ...*

87 Fredegarius, IV, c. 61.....*Zelus Austrasiorum aduersus eodem uehementer surgebat.*

88 Fredegarius, IV, c. 86, translation Wallace-Hadrill; *...nec parua dolore eiusdem transitus cumtis generauit in Auster, eo quod ab ipsis pro iusticiae cultum et bonetatem eiusdem delictus fuissit.* Note that Wallace-Hadrill translates "all Austrasians" where in fact the text says: "everybody in Austrasia", using a territorial term and not a group term. See section 1, above.

89 *AMP*, 2, translation Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France. (Pippinus precellentissimus ... princeps,) qui populum inter Carbonariam silvam et Mosam fluvium et usque ad Fresionum fines vastis limitibus habitantem iustis legibus gubernabat.*

against his lord. His death came with terrible torture".[90]

Pippin, dukes and alliances

Although both Pippin and Grimoald (before the latter's fall) obviously enjoyed great prestige and authority in Austrasia and among the Austrasians, Fredegar uses no special term for their dignity. Of course he terms Pippin *maior domus*, but this indicates an office rather than aristocratic leadership. Such leadership is often indicated by the word *dux*, yet Fredegar, the source closest in time to Pippin, does not use the word in relation to Pippin.[91] With Fredegar the term dux seems rather connected to factional and/or regional leadership[92] and Pippin may have seemed to have acquired a higher position.[93] On the other hand, in his report on Arnulf and Pippin inviting king Chlothar II into Austrasia in 613, both magnates are portrayed as factional leaders, without any explicit mention of dignities (bishop, *dux*).[94] Fredegar provides no indication of the exact relationship between the two men – one, Arnulf, from the Moselle region, the other from the mid-Meuse area. From Fredegar's further report it is clear that they remained political allies after 613.[95] They are the two Austrasian aristocrats whose political activism is most obviously effective.

Yet neither Arnulf nor Pippin is ever called *dux* in (semi-) contemporaneous accounts. In the case of Pippin, once again, it appears that he stood above the *dux*-title. In the Life of Saint Gertrude (written c. 670) we find an episode which provides a glimpse of the interaction between king Dagobert and the mightiest magnate of Austrasia, Pippin – and which also seems to imply that Pippin was not to be named a *dux*. The *Vita*[96] recounts how Pippin received king Dagobert in his house "for

90 *LHF*, c. 43, translation Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*; *In Parisius civitate in carcere mancipatus, vinculorum cruciatu constrictus, ut erat morte dignus, quod in domino suo exercuit, ipsius mors valido cruciatu finivit.*

91 At only one occasion Fredegar's text appears to imply that Pippin was a *dux* because he is named in connection to "the other dukes": Fredegarius, IV, c. 85: *Cum Pippinus maior domi post Dagoberti obetum et citiri ducis Austrasiorum qui usque in transito Dagoberti suae fuerant dicione retenti Sigybertum unanenem conspiracionem expetissent...*

92 See for instance Fredegarius, III, c. 89: *...a Bosone duce factione...* (referring to Guntram Boso); Fredegarius, IV, c. 14, 18, on Wintrio.

93 The first narrative source to name Pippin *dux* is the *LHF*, c. 14. In the *Annales Mettenses Priores* he has advanced to *princeps*.

94 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40, *Chlotharius factione Arnulfo et Pippino uel citeris procerebus Auster ingreditur.*

95 On the possible family relationship between Arnulf and Pippin of Herstal, see chapter 2 section 2. There is no reason to believe the assertion of Paulus Diaconus that Arnulf was the father of Ansegisel, Pippin of Herstal's father. There was no family relationship between Arnulf and Pippin of Landen.

96 The *Vitae Geretrudis* has been analyzed and translated in Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*. It is their translation which is quoted in the following.

a lordly meal". The episode will have taken place during Dagobert's royal progress through Austrasia in 630,[97] at Nivelles or near there. Dagobert was not the only guest at Pippin's table at that occasion. There arrived also "the son of a duke of the Austrasians ..., a noxious character, and he had entreated the king and the parents of the girl (= Gertrude, daughter of Pippin and Itta) that this girl be promised to him in matrimony according to the custom of the world for the sake of his worldly ambition and a mutual alliance". Mark that there is mention of "a duke of the Austrasians", not of "another duke of the Austrasians".[98] It has been proposed that the obnoxious suitor was the son of duke Adalgisel, but this cannot be proven.[99] Be that as it may, the suitor was refused. The *Vita* says that Gertrude, who must have been a girl of about ten at the time, "said she wanted...neither him nor any other earthly man as her groom, but rather Christ the Lord". It appears as if an effort, sponsored by Dagobert, to forge a political alliance between two factions (Pippin's and some Austrasian duke's) had miscarried. Rather than that the devout motives of young Gertrude settled the matter, it appears that Pippin and the "duke" had been unable to find common ground.[100]

Yet alliances between the great became and remained crucial to political dynamics within Austrasia. A man like duke Adalgisel, who was influential at the court of Sigebert III, Childebert Adoptivus (presumably) and Childeric II,[101] was a staunch ally of mayor of the palace Grimoald and had also been a friend of Chunibert. Besides, if the duke was a relative of Adalgisel Grimo – the deacon from Verdun whose will (dated 634) was edited by Levison[102] – which is possible

97 For the royal tour, see Fredegarius, IV, c. 58. My hypothesis that the event (the dinner with Dagobert and a suitor at Pippin's house) occurred during the Royal Tour of 630 cannot be proven, so the timing remains tentative. Yet it seems not improbable, either. Placing the event before c. 630 would make Gertrude all too young for the role she is given to play (active and passive). Also, the event will have taken place no later than 633, because in that year Dagobert installed young Sigebert III as king of Austrasia and afterwards never returned there personally. Finally, a royal progress is, of course, a good opportunity to visit a magnate at his family seat in the country.

98 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 1. The original text reads: *Dum Pippinus ... regem Dagobertum domui sue ad nobilem prandium invitasset, adveniens ibidem unus pestifer homo, filius ducis Austrasiorum, qui a rege et a parentibus puellae* (= Gertrude) *postulasset, ut sibi ipsa puella in matrimonium fuisset promissa secundum morem saeculi propter terrenam ambitionem et mutuam amicitiam.*

99 The proposition by A. Friese (*Studien zur Herrschaftsgeschichte des fränkischen Adels des Mainländisch-Thüringischen Raums vom 7. bis 11. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 1979) 22 note 41) is reported in Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 312-313, note 60.

100 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 1.

101 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, V. Adalgisel was signatory of Sigebert III's charter sponsoring Cugnon (644), as well as of a charter of Childeric II specifying the possessions of Stavelot-Malmédy (670). Childebert Adoptivus ruled between the reigns of these two kings.

102 W. Levison: 'Das Testament des Diakons Adalgisel-Grimo', in: *Trierer Zeitschrift* VII 1932, volume 1 and 2, 69-85

but not certain, he may have had family ties with the clan of Arnulf of Metz.[103] Pippin of Herstal, who restored his families fortunes after the hard years following the fall of his uncle Grimoald, found an ally in duke Martin of Champagne.[104] Pippin had revenged the murder of his father Ansegisel on duke Gundoin, who had been an ally of Vulfoald and is called a *tirannus* in the *Annales Mettenses Priores*.[105] In fact, we may discern at least two "clouds of allies" in mid VIIth-century Austrasia (the word "faction" appears too neat for the phenomenon). One was grouped around Grimoald and, later, his nephew Pippin of Herstal; it included Adalgisel, Martin and the Arnulfingians; the link with the Arnulfingians probably originated in the days of Arnulf of Metz and Pippin of Landen. Another was grouped around Vulfoald and included Ansegisel's murderer Gundoin and duke Adalric Eticho of Alsace, who went over from the Neustrian to the Austrasian side in the days of Ebroin – and whom we later, after Vulfoald's death, may find on the side of Dagobert II.[106] Somewhat earlier, in the 630's, in Thuringia, *dux* Radulf had revealed himself as an enemy of Adalgisel and, ultimately, royal authority itself.[107]

Faction strife

All faction politics in Austrasia essentially was about having or gaining access to the king, about forging alliances and coalitions, about using family ties to consolidate agreements and settlements. Not in all cases the king himself will have lent his presence to sponsor a coalition. In the case just mentioned from the *Vita Geretrudis*, however – Dagobert I brokering between Pippin and an unnamed Austrasian duke – the king may have been prepared to invest in a stable alliance between his Austrasian friends, now that he was to move his residence from Austrasia to the Île-de-France. The king stuck out his neck for Pippin, of whose family it is said, in the same Life of Getrude: "who living in Europe, does not know the loftiness, the names, and the localities of her lineage?"[108] This qualification of the fame of Pippin's clan, invoking the concept of Europe as a fitting context for its supraregional importance, suggests the high esteem in which it was held already relatively early in the VIIth century.[109]

103 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, V.

104 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCXXXVII.

105 *AMP*, 1-2. Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CXCIX.

106 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, V, VIII, CXCIX, CCXXXVII, CCCXIII. On Adalrich's position concerning Dagobert II see Wood, *The Merovingian kingdoms*, 233-234.

107 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCLXI.

108 *Vita Geretrudis*, prologue; *Quisnam in Euruppa habitans, huius progenie altitudinem, nomina ignorat et loca?*

109 There are other near contemporary sources suggesting the importance of the Pippinids by invoking a European context: the *Vita Landiberti Vetustissima* and the *Vita Servatii Vetuste. See chapter 2, section 5.*

It helps explain why Dagobert I appears to have gone out of his way to try and arrange the crucial marriage.

As it is, the alliance between Pippin and the *dux Austrasiorum* sprang off. There may or there may not have been a link between this failure and the subsequent trouble Pippin found himself in.[110] In any case, Pippin's troubles sprang from Dagobert's departure to the West to govern the three kingdoms from there. Part – or symptom – of his troubles was the temporary estrangement between him and bishop Chunibert of Cologne, who after 633 shared authority at young Sigebert III's court with Adalgisel, not with Pippin. Their relations were mended following Dagobert I's death (638), when the Austrasians confirmed the kingship of Sigebert III and the two men allied and carefully built a political basis among the Austrasian aristocrats. Listen to Fredegar: "After Dagobert's death, Pippin the mayor of the palace and the other Austrasian dukes who had hitherto been Dagobert's subjects sought Sigebert for their king. Pippin and Chunibert, once good friends, had just come together again and agreed always to help and support one another. Jointly and with suitable blandishments they drew the Austrasian notables into their orbit, ruled them generously, won their support and knew how to keep it".[111] Soon afterwards Pippin died (639) and his son Grimoald, although he "was loved, like his father, by most people",[112] had temporarily to relinquish authority to his rival Otto, but continued his late father's alliance with Chunibert. Here we get a clear view of factional struggle among Austrasian aristocrats. Fredegar names Otto – "(a man) swollen with pride and carried away by envy against Grimoald (whom) het tried to displace"[113] – the son of the *domesticus* Uro, the tutor (*baiolus*) of young king Sigebert.[114] In the end Otto was murdered at the instigation of Grimoald, who now became mayor of the palace.[115] The fact that Otto's fall followed hard on the disastrous military defeat which the Austrasians

110 If the suitor was indeed the son of duke Adalgisel, his déconfiture did no permanent harm to relations between Adalgisel and the Pippinids: according to Ebling, *Prosopographie*, V, Adalgisel became an ally of Gertude's brother Grimoald.

111 Fredegarius, IV, c. 85; *Cum Pippinus maior domi post Dagoberti obetum citiri ducis Austrasiorum qui usque in transito Dagoberti suae fuerant dicione retenti Sigybertum unanemem conspiracionem expetissent Pippinus cum Chuniberto, sicut et prius amiciciae cultum in inuicem conlovati fuerant, et nuper sicut et prius amiciciam uehementer se firmeter perpetuo conseruandum oblegant, omnesque leudis Austrasiorum secum uterque prudenter et cum dulcedene adtragentes, eos benigne gobernantes eorum amiciciam constringent sempterque seruandum.* The text could be understood as indicating that up to Dagobert's death mayor of the palace Pippin and a number of Austrasian magnates had remained faithful to Dagobert, whereas other Austrasians, possibly led by Chunibert, had maintained the authority of young Sigebert.

112 Fredegarius, IV, c. 86; *... ad instar patris diligeretur a plurimis ...*

113 Ibidem... *contra Grimoaldo superbiam tomens et zelum ducens eumque dispecere conetur ...*

114 Ibidem.

115 Fredegarius, IV, c. 88.

suffered at the hand of Radulf of Thuringia (639)[116] suggests that military reputation was crucial to authority in Austrasia and that, consequently, defeat in war entailed loss of authority.
A period of aristocratic strife and conflict in Austrasia followed the execution of Grimoald by the Neustrians. For a while, the stage was dominated by the opposing faction. Vulfoald dominated the Austrasian court. One if his allies was Gundoin, the murderer of Grimoald's brother-in-law Ansegisel.[117]

The crisis of Childeric II

The *dux* and faction leader Vulfoald had allied himself with Sigebert III's widow Himnechild and became the major power broker at the Austrasian court of Childeric II.[118] This alliance between *dux* and queen-widow is a remarkable one and may have contributed to the unusual power obviously wielded by Himnechild.[119] In 673, after an uprising in Neustria had temporarily ousted Theuderic III and Ebroin, Vulfoald and "his" Austrasian king Childeric II took over in Neustria. Vulfoald became the king's mayor of the palace.[120] Other than in 629, when the departure of Dagobert I and Pippin to Neustria led to much dissatisfaction in Austrasia things initially kept calm this time. A main reason for this will have been that king Childeric, following a general appeal, issued some edicts, the texts of which unfortunately are not preserved, that dealt with the distribution of competences between the magistrates in the three kingdoms.[121] The Burgundian *Passio Leudegarii*, a near contemporary source, reports how, in response to the general appeal, Childeric originally decided to "issue the following edicts throughout the three kingdoms over which he had gained sway: that as of old the judges should maintain the law and custom of each kingdom and that rules from one [province] should not intrude in the others lest one of them should ... look down on his peers, for, as they acknowledged that access to the highest position should be open to all, nobody was to presume to place himself before another".[122] The text used by

116 Fredegarius, IV, c. 87.
117 *AMP*, 1-2. Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CXCIX.
118 On the alliance between Himnechild and Vulfoald see Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 264. Also: *Passio Praejecti episcopi et martyris Averni*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM V (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 223-224, c. 24 and 25.
119 *Passio Praejecti*, c. 24; Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 289, note 112.
120 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCCXIII.
121 *Passio Leudegarii*, c. 7.
122 Ibidem; translation: see Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*; *Interea Childerico rege expetiunt universi, ut talia daret decreta per tria quam obtinuerit regna, ut uniuscuiusque patriae legem vel consuetudinem deberent, sicut antiquitus, iudices conservare, et ne de una provintia rectore in aliis introirent, neque unus at instar Ebroini tyrrannidem adsumeret, ut postmodum sicut ille contubernales suos despiceret; sed dum mutua sibi successione culminis habere cognoscerent, nullus se alio anteferre auderet.*

the *Passio* reminds one of the Paris edicts which Chlothar II had issued in 614. However, soon afterwards things went awry. The *Passio* next reports: "Childeric was now corrupted by the advice he took from foolish and nearly pagan people. And, subject to the inconstancy of youth, what he had confirmed through the council of wise men, suddenly he retracted".[123] Who were these "nearly pagan people" who made the king change his mind? It is plausible that here the king's Austrasian entourage is meant: the mayor of the palace Vulfoald and his followers,[124] men who in the eyes of the Burgundian author, who wrote the *Passio Leudegarii* in Autun in c. 680,[125] would have been men from the uncouth North-eastern parts of Francia. According to the *Passio* the king infuriated the Neustrians and Burgundians by "retracting" the edicts that he had earlier confirmed: *quod ... confirmaverat refragavit.*[126] We have no way of knowing whether the king really acted on the advice of his Austrasian counselors. We can, however, conclude that the *Passio*-author was of the opinion that these counselors, presumably Austrasian aristocrats, were no good at all. Here we have a conflict of interests, which was probably aggravated by a difference of culture: this last is suggested not only by the words used by the author of the *Passio* ("nearly pagan people"), but also by the serious incident related in the *Liber Historiae Francorum* concerning the "illegal" flogging, presumably on the king's orders, of a certain Neustrian Frank called Bodilo.[127] It was this incident which led, not long afterward, to the murder of king Childeric and his queen Bilichild (675). Vulfoald fled back to Austrasia.[128]

Aristocratic opposition as an Austrasian characteristic

It was at about this time that Pippin (II) succeeded in doing away with his father's murderer Gundoin.[129] Next, following Vulfoald's death, Pippin now became a powerful faction leader, together with his ally Martin, *dux* of Champagne.[130] On their relation with king Dagobert II and their war with Ebroin more is said in chapter two and in the next section. Here it suffices to conclude that the period is characterised by intense

123 *Passio Leudegarii*, c. 7; translation: Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*; *... stultorum et pene gentilium depravatus consilio, ut erat iuvenile levitate praeventus, subito quod per sapientium consilia confirmaverat refragavit.*

124 *Passio Leudegarii*, c. 9 and *LHF*, c. 45.

125 See Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 195-196.

126 *Passio Leudegarii,* c. 7.

127 *Passio Leudegarii*, c. 9 and *LHF*, c. 45; A difference of culture as cause for the murder is also suggested by the *LHF*'s author, writing fifty years later: *Childericus ... incaute peragebat... Francos valde oppremens. Ex quibus uno Franco nomine Bodilone ad stipitem tensum cedere valde sine lege precepit.*

128 *Passio Leudegarii*, c. 9 and *LHF*, c. 45.

129 *AMP*, 1-2. An exact time cannot be deduced from our sources.

130 *LHF*, c. 46. Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCXXXVII.

factional strife. A character typical of the times is presented by Adalrich Eticho, an intriguing personality who – although rather an Alsatian than an Austrasian[131] – probably played a role in what was to prove the last Austrasian bid to have, in Dagobert II, a king of its own. The *Passio Leudegarii* reports on Adalrich's ambitions to become *patricius* of Provence and also on a military expedition he undertook against Lyons during Ebroin's return to power.[132] He failed on both occasions and next turned against Theuderic III and Ebroin, in the meantime focussing on finding allies in Austrasia. Adalrich Eticho presents us with the spectacle of an ambitious and opportunistic *dux* who supported or deserted kings at will and did not shun ruthless methods, witness the murder of abbot Germanus of Grandval (c. 675).[133]

All the ambitious and activist Austrasian leaders dealt with in this section, from Munderic (530's) and Rauching (580's) up to Pippin (II), Martin and Adalrich Eticho in the 670's, defined themselves, one way or another, in relation to kings and kingship. In the early VIth century the aim of activist Austrasian warriors was simple: they demanded that their kings lead them to war and booty. Soon they found more sophisticated ways to use kingship for their purposes. Munderic and Rauching claimed to be of royal blood. Guntram Boso and his friends harnessed for their purpose the spurned Merovingian prince Gundovald, whom they tried to set up as king. Arnulf, Chunibert and Romaric appear to combine influence at court with spiritual authority. A next step was set by Pippin of Landen, who together with Arnulf invited Chlothar II to take over kingship in Austrasia, was the great counselor of Dagobert I and became the godfather of Sigebert III. He appears to have been in a category of his own. Dagobert was a guest in his house. Grimoald stood on the threshold of securing an even more exalted position, when he fell into the hands of his enemies and was ignobly tortured to death. The repercussions were enormous, both psychologically – witness the *damnatio* of Grimoald's memory – and politically. The violent factional struggles following Grimoald's fall bear witness to this.

When, under Pippin II, a Pippinid and indeed Austrasian hegemony in the *Regnum Francorum* rapidly developed, this generated its own Austrasian opposition – in line with the aristocratic activism typical for the region. Of this type of opposition Rupert provides an example. He may have stemmed from the mid-Rhine, because in 696/7 he is

131 Adalrich original roots may have been Burgundian. He succeeded Gundoin and Boniface as duke in Alsace; Ebling, *Prosopographie*, VIII; Bobolenus, *Vita Germani abbatis Grandivallensis*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig) 25-40, 10; see also Krusch' introduction, 27.

132 *Passio Leudegarii*, 26 and Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 230.

133 *Vita Germani*, c. 12.

found there as bishop of Worms.[134] His *Vita* practically opens with the account of his departure from Worms for Bavaria, where he allegedly became the founder-bishop of Salzburg. But what is important here is the fact that Rupert's departure from Worms was more a consequence of his opposition to Pippin II than of his obeying a missionary vocation retrospectively ascribed to him.[135] The departure of Rupert did not imply that the opposition ended. Pippin was to see his son Grimoald murdered by one Rantgar (714)[136] and although we know nothing of the murderers background the assassination fits the pattern of factional strife – as did the murder of bishop Lambert of Maastricht in c. 700.[137] The latter murder, rather than being the martyr's death as it was later claimed to be, was presumably linked to the conflict between the opposed clans of Pippin II's two wives Plectrudis and Alpaida[138] – which of course was a highly political conflict as well as a quarrel between rivalling family-clans. The same conflict erupted once more following Pippin II's death in 714.[139]
The history of Austrasian aristocracy reflects an increasingly effective activism. Austrasian aristocrats have a stronger say in who will be king than is the case with their counterparts in Neustria and Burgundy. At the same time, all Austrasian aristocratic leaders define themselves in relation to king or kingship, albeit in different ways. This is especially true of a series of power brokers who operate in VIIth-century Austrasia: Arnulf, who survived the régime change of 613 and was close to Chlothar II; Romaric, who was close to Sigebert III's mayor Grimoald; Pippin I, counselor to three kings (Chlothar II, Dagobert I and Sigebert III); Grimoald, who arranged for a special kind of royal succession in 651 – not without success, though with consequences fatal to himself; Pippin II, who restored the Pippinid and Austrasian fortunes and initiated a profound rearrangement of power within the kingdoms of the Franks. The rearrangement generated its own opposition, also in Austrasia[140] – but it led ultimately to the emergence of Carolingian rule, which found its roots and its strength to a large extent in the traditional activism of the Austrasian aristocracy.

134 *Gesta Hrodberti*, c. 1, *… Hiltiperhti regis Francorum, anno … regni ilius secundo … Hrodbertus in Wormacia civitate habebatur episcopus.* Childerbert III ruled 696-711.
135 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 162 and 266. On opposition in Austrasia see also H. Ebling, 'Die inneraustrasische Opposition' in: J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter ed., *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen 1994) 295-304.
136 *LHF*, c. 50.
137 *Vita Landiberti vetustissima*, c. 7 and 13.
138 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 270.
139 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 270; R. A. Gerberding, '716. A crucial year for Charles Martel' in: J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter ed., *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen 1994), 205-216.
140 H. Ebling, 'Die inneraustrasische Opposition' in: J. Jarnut, U. Nonn and M. Richter ed., *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit* (Sigmaringen 1994) 295-304.

Section 4. Austrasian aristocrats and kingship

Rather than sharing Eugen Ewig's views on the divisions of the Regnum Francorum as resulting from political or dynastical expediency, this study operates from the conviction that regional differences between the "Teilreiche" formed a conclusive element and, specifically in the case of Austrasia as compared to Neustria and Burgundy, lend them permanence. One of the clearest distinctive factors characterising Austrasia is to be found in the relationship of its aristocrats to their kings. In the Vth century and till into Clovis' reign the Ripuarians had kings of their own, excercizing power over small territorial entities.[141] Following Clovis' death the Eastern lands were allotted to Theuderic I, the only of Clovis' four sons who was not a son of Chlothild. We do not know Theuderic's mother, but it is tempting to think she was of Eastern Frank provenance. This is not the place to (again) set out the history of Austrasian magnates and how they dealt with kings or set up candidates for kingship. But this history should be kept in mind when next we look at two aspects of the way kingship worked out in the aristocratic society of Austrasia.
One aspect is of a generic character and concerns the question of electivity of kingship in Austrasia. The other aspect is of a specific and anecdotic character and consists of an analysis of the accession, rule and murder of Dagobert II, king in Austrasia from 676 till 679. The purpose of dealing with both aspects is to gain some further insight in how, in Austrasia, kingship and aristocracy interacted.
Concerning electivity, we observe that, in the VIIth century, there remained strong elements of the elective principle in Frankish kingship[142] – and in fact this remained a dominant, albeit sometimes disguised element of medieval kingship in general. Notwithstanding the fact that kingship of the Franks was reserved for members of the Merovingian clan, succession depended on more than just heredity [143] To be eligible for kingship, a man had to fit within a "construct entangled of heredity and election".[144] That is: he had to possess the legitimacy of the *stirps regia* – be a Merovingian; he had to share in the sacral inheritance of the Merovingians – which in itself resulted from a synthesis of the war

141 *DLH*, II, c. 37 and 40.

142 Schneider, *Königswahl und Königserhebung*.

143 On heredity and electivity see: Franz-Reiner Erkens: Teilung und Einheit, Wahlkönigtum und Erbmonarchie. Vom Wandel gelebter Normen. In: Helmut Neuhaus (Hrsg.): Verfassungsänderungen. Tagung der Vereinigung für Verfassungsgeschichte in Hofgeismar vom 15. bis 17. März 2010. Duncker & Humblot, Berlin 2012 (Beihefte zu Der Staat, Bd. 20), 9–34.

144 „Die merkwürdige Verschränkung von Erbrecht und Wahl"; W. Schlesinger, ‚Über germanisches Heerkönigtum', in: E. Ewig ed., *Das Königtum, seine geistigen und rechtlichen Grundlagen. Mainauvorträge 1954* (Lindau 1956) 105-141, 105.

leaders' charisma and the hallowedness of the people's "kuning";[145] and the *multitudo nobilium*, the " gathering of the great", had to take his bid for kingship in serious consideration.[146] There were more conditions to become a king (*idoneitas* being a general term in this context), but we will not deal with all of them. Suffice it to say that "no early medieval king ever succeeded to his kingdom as a matter of course".[147]

Historiography provides us with several episodes illustrating – more or less clearly – how the "gathering of the great" actually worked with respect to royal successions in Austrasia.

When in 613 Chlothar II of Neustria, invited by the faction of Arnulf and Pippin, entered Austrasia, ambassadors of Brunhild met him at Andernach and demanded that he leave the kingdom, which the late Theuderic II had left to his sons. Chlothar's response, as reported by Fredegar, is revealing: "Chlothar then replied to Brunechildis through her envoys that he undertook to abide by whatever decision should, with God's help, be arrived at by a gathering of Franks chosen for that purpose".[148] Chlothar in fact states that a gathering will have to take place because that is the thing to do when, after the death of a king, in this case Theuderic II, succession is in order. Fredegar's text suggests that such a gathering would consist "of a group of selected Franks" (*Francorum electorum*) – the "selected" actually referring to a process through which competing leaders come to agree upon a group of negotiators –, power-brokers who would constitute a gathering with authority to acclaim a king (or sanction an act of state in general).[149] In the current case the triumphant Chlothar had his young rival Sigebert II killed. Therefore, the "gathering of the great" – if actually it did meet in 613; Fredegar does not confirm this – could only have acclaimed Chlothar.

There are other occasions where we know the "gathering of the great" to have actually been held in Austrasia, providing an occasion where the great expressed themselves on a royal succession. In 633, as we saw before, Dagobert I was forced to install his son Sigebert III as king in Austrasia. Fredegar's account of the occasion provides a clear view of a "gathering of the great" fulfilling its role. "Dagobert came to the city of Metz and there, on the advice of his bishops and lords and with the consent of all the great

145 Ibidem, 107 and 133.

146 Schneider, *Königswahl und Königserhebung*, 97-104 and I.N. Wood, 'Kings, kingdoms and consent' in: P. Sawyer and I.N. Wood ed., *Early Medieval kingship* (Leeds 1977) 6-29, 11 and 17.

147 Nelson, 'Inauguration rituals', 51.

148 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40. *Chlotharius respondebat et per suos legatus Brunechilde mandabat, iudicio Francorum electorum quicquid precedente Domino a Francis inter eosdem iudicabatur, pollicetur esse implere.*

149 Fredegar reports that, when in 610 conflict erupted over Alsace between Theudebert II of Austrasia and Theuderic II of Burgundy, a meeting was held at Seltz where a "Frankish judgement" – *Francorum iudicium* – was to bring the decision; Fredegarius, IV, c. 37.

men of his kingdom, placed his son Sigebert on the throne of Austrasia and allowed him to make Metz his headquarters".[150] Although according to Fredegar "all the great men of his (=Dagobert's) kingdom" consented, implying Neustrian and Burgundian consent, we can be certain that the Austrasians' demands were decisive at the occasion: it was the disastrous war in the East which had led to the very disturbed relationship between them and Dagobert and now, in 633, they forced the king's hand. When, some months later, Dagobert had to consent in the eventual divided succession as kings by his sons Sigebert III and the newly-born Clovis, Fredegar reports how "all the Austrasian magnates, the bishops and all the warriors of Sigebert swore with hands raised" on the arrangement.[151] Five years later, after Dagobert I had died, the Austrasian great asserted their rights as they "unanimously sought Sigebert for their king",[152] led by Pippin (638).

"Gatherings of the great" were, of course, also held in Neustria and Burgundy, not to speak about other 'successor-states in the West'.[153] Yet in Austrasia – or at least in contemporary narratives on Austrasia[154] – there seems to have been a particular emphasis on the link between royal successions / accessions and such gatherings. Neither Fredegar nor other narrative sources show a comparably close link existing within the other kingdoms. This suggests that Austrasian magnates had rather a strong say

150 Fredegarius, IV, c. 75 (Translation Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar*): *Dagobertus Mettis orbem ueniens, cum consilio ponteuecum seo et procerum, omnesque primatis regni sui consencientebus, Sigybertum filium suum in Auster regem sublimauit sedemque ei Mettis ciuitatem habere permisit*. Although Fredegar makes no mention of a "gathering of the great" when Chlothar II made Dagobert his *consors regni* in 622, we can be certain that such a gethering took place – it would be interesting to know whether in Austrasia or in Neustria.

151 Fredegarius, IV, c. 76 (Translation Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar*): *... Austrasiorum omnes primati, ponteuecis citirique leudis Sigyberti manus eorum ponentes insuper, sacramentis firmauerunt ...*

152 Ibidem, 85 (Wallace-Hadrill, *Chronicle of Fredegar*): *Cum Pippinus maior domi post Dagoberti obetum et citiri ducis Austrasiorum qui usque in transito Dagoberti suae fuerant dicione retenti Sigybertum unanemem conspiracionem expetissent ...*

153 For Neustria see, for instance, *Passio Leudegarii*, I, 5; Nelson, 'Inauguration rituals', 53; for Burgundy see Fredegarius, IV, 44 (Gathering probably at Bonneuil-sur-Marne).

154 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40; *LHF*, c. 41; *HGF*, c. 33; *Annales Regni Francorum, s.a.* 749 and 750 (Although this passage refers, according to the source, to a gathering held at Soissons, it concerns the elevation of the Austrasian Pippin to the kingship; other sources – *HGF*, *AMP* – make no mention of Soissons); See also the *AMP*, 2: *Interea duces ac optimates Francorum ... ad Pippinum properant seque cum omnibus quos gubernabant suae dictioni mancipant*. Here a gathering of the (Austrasian) great is said to have put themselves under the "rule" of Pippin I (who was of course not a king but was unabashedly presented as one by the *AMP*-text two centuries later); p. 20: *Ut autem* [*Carolus* = Charles Martel] *aperte cunctanto plebi aparuit, tanta favore tantaque gratulatione ab universis susceptus est, acsi dominator eorum Pippinus ad consolationem eorum revixisset* (Charles Martel is accepted as leader by a gathering of the Austrasian great. Again: although Charles is not a king, the *AMP* presents him as such).

when it came to accepting kings. If this is the case, it is a circumstance which may help us to understand why the so-called coup of Grimoald, while anathema to the Neustrians, seems to have been accepted by the Austrasians: Grimoald and his allies in Austrasia may have felt they were merely exercizin a legitimate right when they preferred Childebert *Adoptivus* above the infant Dagobert (II). Also, this strong say of Austrasian magnates on who was to be (their) king will have contributed greatly to the acceptance of Pippin the Short's accession to the throne in 751.

Now – once again – for the episode of Dagobert II's rule and fall, the account of which, though both obscure and anecdotic, may serve to illustrate how Austrasian aristocrats went about acquiring a king of their own. This episode was referred to in the previous section, within the context of aristocratic activism, and also in chapter two, as an instance of how kingship and policy-making influenced each other. Here the focus is on aristocrats making alliances among themselves and with churchmen to procure themselves with a king who may legitimately lead them against their enemies.

Following the murder of Childeric II and his queen Bilichild, the Austrasians – or at least a substantial part of the magnates – faced with the need to have a new king, decided that they preferred a ruler with a sufficient degree of Austrasianness. They placed their hope on the son of the late Sigebert III, Dagobert, by now at least twenty-six years old and still living in exile in Ireland, where Dido of Poitiers had taken him when an infant.

How this new chance for Dagobert came about is described in the *Vita Wilfridi*, which dates from c. 715. Wilfrid, the prominent and controversial bishop of York, got involved in Dagobert's "restoration". In chapter 28 of his *Vita* the author, Stephen of Ripon, writes: "After the passing of years, when his friends and relatives heard from sailors that he (Dagobert) was living and flourishing in adulthood, they sent their messengers to blessed bishop Wilfred asking that he call him from Scotland and Ireland to himself and sent him forth to be made king". The author goes on: "And our holy bishop did indeed bring about that, when he had been fetched from Ireland, he could be sent in great style to his own country, supported by all kinds of riches and by men allied to him".[155] Thus leading factions in Austrasia acquired a king. It is not clear who were in the lead in this process. Gerberding points out that his reinterpretation of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* suggests that Pippin II

155 *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 28; *Et sic sanctus pontifex noster perfecit, sucipiens eum de Hibernia venientem, per omnia ditatum et viribus sociorum elevatum magnifice ad suam regionem emisit.*

and Martin may already have "dominated" Austrasia at the time.[156] Wood sees, quite plausibly, a leading role in Dagobert's restoration for their rival Adalrich Eticho, who deserted Theuderic III for the Austrasian side.[157]
In the meantime, several things are suggested by the circumstances of Dagobert's return. First, there is the nature of the first contact which the Austrasians sought: their *nuntii* went to bishop Wilfrid, not to a king or a worldly magnate in Britain. It seems probable, therefore, that the *nuntii* themselves were sent by Austrasians who had some affinity with the clerical sphere. Considering the fact that Dagobert had spent part – or all – of his exile in Ireland, abbot Ultan of Fosses comes to mind.[158] Second, Wilfrid complied immediately and more than fully, probably providing some of the necessities for Dagobert's "great style" himself, which suggests that he felt Dagobert's accession to be a good thing – likely for the church. Brief: there are strong suggestions of a community of interest between the Anglo-Saxon bishop and those Austrasians who wished Dagobert II for their king. The new king may indeed have been put on the throne by a combination of Austrasian magnates, possible an unstable one,[159] yet it is plausible that also ecclesiastical considerations played a role within this coalition. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that Wilfrid, passing through Austrasia on his way to Rome in 679, was offered the diocese of Strasbourg by Dagobert II. Wilfrid politely refused, whereupon the king provided the bishop for his further journey with the company of bishop Deodatus of Toul.[160] This suggests a king who maintained contact with the episcopal hierarchy which in Austrasia, during the preceding period, had got somewhat in eclipse (see chapter three).
Then, on his way back from Rome in 680 Wilfrid, travelling through Francia, was surprised to learn that "his faithful friend king Dagobert, through the ruses of the dukes and with the consent – alas! – of the

156 Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 80.
157 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 233. Adalrich Etico and another duke, Waimar – with their background in Alsace and Champagne, respectively – are mentioned in the *Passio Leudegarii* (c. 18, 25 and 26) as Austrasian supporters of Ebroin when he returned from Luxeuil and made his successful bid of power in Neustria. As Fouracre and Gerberding point out: they came both from marginal areas of Austrasia (see Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 235, n. 164).
158 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 232, points out that Ultan, who became abbot of Fosses after the murder of his brother Foilan in 650 and still was abbot there at the time of Dagobert's restoration, would have been the obvious contact person with Ireland, especially if Pippin II and Martin had been behind the initiative. Fosses was a family monastery of the Pippinids.
159 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 233: "That these friends of Dagobert are so elusive suggests that there were a number of rival groups within Austrasia, and that as yet the Pippinids had not achieved dominance in the region ...".
160 *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 28.

bishops, had just been insidiously killed".[161] So much for the episcopal connections of Dagobert II, one would say – yet Stephen's further account gives food for thought on this point.

Who killed Dagobert II and for what reason? Listen to what Stephen of Ripon writes in the *Vita Wilfridi*, when describing Wilfrid's way back from Rome and travelling through Francia. It is not stated which route the Northumbrian bishop took or in what part of Francia he found himself when he was met on the road by a very angry bishop who led a huge armed retinue and stopped Wilfrid and his company, "intending to plunder them all or lead them into slavery or have them auctioned off, even to kill those who would fight – and to lead our holy pastor (Wilfrid), who was very troubled by it all, as a prisoner to duke Ebroin, to be judged by him".[162] From the fact that the *Vita Wilfridi* reports that, not long before this episode, Wilfrid and his company had been travelling through Campania and had crossed the mountains, as well as from the fact that the opposing bishop obviously recognized the authority of Ebroin[163], one may deduce that Wilfrid's meeting with the ill-intended colleague probably did not take place in Austrasia, but rather in territory more or less controlled by Ebroin and not too far away from the Alps – Upper-Burgundy, say. Therefore, the hostile bishop's angry words to Wilfrid should not simply be linked to Austrasian opposition against Dagobert, but rather to Ebroin-inspired rhetoric. "You are worthy of death", the angry bishop snarled at Wilfrid, "for having sent to us out of exile, with your express help, a king who destroyed cities, who despised the counsels of the wise, who like Rehabeam, Salomon's son, humiliated the people through tribute and who scorned the churches of God as well as their bishops. As punishment and compensation for these evils he was killed and his body now rests in the grave".[164] The reasons which the bishop gives for the murder of Dagobert sound like the reasons given at similar occasions when opposition against a king or his officials had to be justified: the king despises counsel, he levies unjust tribute, he harries the church. It was the kind of argument brought against Childeric II. In fact it was the kind of argument brought against Ebroin himself in 673.[165] Apart from the fact that it sounds more like a Neustrian-

161 *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 33; *... ibique nuper amico suo fideli Daeghoberhto rege per dolum ducum et consensu episcoporum – quod absit! – insidiose occiso.*

162 *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 33.

163 Ibidem.

164 Ibidem. *Qui dignus es morte, quia nobis regem subsidio tuo factum exilio emisisti, dissipatorem urbium, consilia seniorum despiciens, populos ut Roboam filius Salomonis tributo humilians, ęcclesias Dei cum praesulibus contempnens: quorum malorum poenas luens occisus cadaver eius humatum iacet.*

165 *Passio Leudegarii*, c. 4 and 5.

Burgundian kind of argument than an Austrasian one, and apart from the fact that the reproaches were probably brought forward by a Neustrian-Burgundian bishop, there is the fact that Ebroin indeed was an enemy of Dagobert II, who had been set up against "his" king Theuderic III. War had been waged – specifically in Burgundian territory,[166] which may have contributed to the opposing bishop's anger if he indeed was a Burgundian – and in the course of this war Dagobert II was murdered. "Ebroin may have been involved".[167] The battle of Lucofao, where Ebroin beat Pippin and Martin, may have been a crucial moment of this war, but the murder of Dagobert was in all probability decisive. Be that as it may, Dagobert II's murderers were motivated by considerations which were not primarily Austrasian. And the fact that bishops allegedly "consented" in the murder does not imply that these were Austrasian bishops – or that doubt should be shed on the ecclesiastical involvement with Dagobert's restoration, which seems probable from the involvement of Wilfrid.

The two aspects just discussed – the significance of "gatherings of the great" in Austrasia and the aristocratic basis for Dagobert II's kingship – make clear how Austrasian aristocrats understood how to harness kingship to their policies. In this respect, the element of electivity, which was also present in relation to kingship in Neustria and Burgundy, was played out more effectively in Austrasia. Here, aristocrats knew how to use it as a political instrument. This dialectic between kingship and aristocracy was to outlast the strictly Austrasian phase of Frankish history: we find it reflected in later periods, starting with the reports on how Charles Martel shortly before his death (741) presented his sons to a "gathering of the great"[168] and, also, in the report on Pippin's elevation to kingship in 751.[169]

The political play between aristocrats and kingship was particularly acute, if difficult to reconstruct, in relation to the accession, reign and murder of Dagobert II. We seem to see how rivalling leaders – Pippin, Martin, Adalrich – form an uneasy alliance in support of this king, who has been "preserved" for them in Ireland and whose legitimacy is not in doubt. There are hints of a political league between these aristocratic supporters and churchmen. King Dagobert II apparently enjoyed the support of both worldly nobles and Austrasian bishops. And thus he became the head (possibly more than a figurehead)[170] of a coalition who waged war against

166 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 233.

167 Ibidem.

168 *AMP*, 31; *... Carolus se egrotare cerneret, congregatis in unum omnibus optimatibus suis, principatum suum inter filios suos aequa lance divisit.*

169 *HGF*, c. 33; *Annales Regni Francorum, s.a.* 749 and 750; *AMP*, 42, however, has no mention of any gathering.

170 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 235.

Ebroin. Despite the defeat at Lucofao, it might have proved a viable gambit, had it not been for the murder of the king.[171]

171 P. Fouracre, 'Forgetting and remembering Dagobert II' in: P. Fouracre and D. Ganz ed., *Frankland* (Manchester 2008) 70-89.

V. Elements of ethnogenesis and understanding Austrasian identity

Section 1. The Franks: a short history and a pretentious tradition

Gregory of Tours reports that many of his contemporaries were of the opinion that the Franks had lived in Pannonia in ancient days and later settled in Thuringia. Having settled there, they allegedly installed *reges crinites,* long-haired kings, according to their various *pagi* and *civitates;*[1] Gregory introduces Chlodio, who conquered the region of Cambrai, made the Somme his southern frontier and became the father of Merovech. For the rest, Gregory is rather reticent on Frankish origins, certainly when compared with Fredegar and with the *Liber Historiae Francorum*.

Fredegar presents us with a fantastic account of how the Franks allegedly originated from a group of fugitive Trojans who, following the fall of their city and after many vicissitudes, settled between the Rhine, the Danube and the sea and chose themselves a certain Francio as their king, after whom they were named. After Francio died, the Franks were ruled by *duces.*[2] The *Liber Historiae Francorum* provides a report which, too, claims a Trojan origin for the Franks. The narrative tells us that they reached, after much combat, the farthest regions of Germany on the borders of the Rhine. Following their arrival there, they chose themselves Pharamond as their *rex crinitus.*[3]

All three narratives agree on the assumption that the Franks came to north-western Germany from the East, although Gregory obviously had no knowledge of the alleged Trojan connection which Fredegar and the *Liber Historiae Francorum* elaborate upon.[4] All three narratives also

1 *DLH*, II c. 9; *Tradunt enim multi eosdem de Pannonia fuisse degressus [et] Thoringiam transmeasse, ibique iuxta pagus vel civitates regis crinitos super se creavisse ...* See also I.N. Wood, 'Defining the Franks. Frankish origins in early medieval historiography' [originally 1995] in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 110-119.

2 Fredegarius, II, c. 4-5.

3 *LHF*, c. 4.

4 Wood, 'Defining the Franks', 116

report how, having settled in north-western Germany, the Franks took themselves kings – whom Gregory and the *Liber Historiae Francorum* designate *reges crinites*.[5]

In Gregory's version, the Franks had not much history to look back upon – and this was even more true of their ruling dynasty, the Merovingians. The Franks came from Pannonia, settled in Thuringia and Chlodio conquered Northern Gaul. Chlodio was only the great-grandfather of Clovis. This compares poorly to, say, the seventeen kings in the genealogy of the Osthrogothic kings.[6] Fredegar and the *Liber Historiae Francorum* do not provide the Merovingians with more seniority, but they certainly go out of their way to provide the Franks as such with a respectable background, making them Trojans and, as such, "brothers of the Romans".[7]

Seen in the context of the debate between Wolfram and Goffart[8] on whether *gentes* in late antiquity had "long histories" or, on the contrary, short ones, the Franks provide us with the example of a people with a short history. Certainly the Merovingian dynasty had a short history. Neither Gregory nor Fredegar or the author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* reveal anything about Merovingian Frankish kings from before Chlodio, that is to say: before the mid-Vth century; Pharamond is not presented as a Merovingian.[9]

All this is not to say that there did not exist or develop, during the two centuries of Merovingian rule, a distinct set of Frankish-Merovingian traditions closely connected to what I will venture to call a Frankish identity. The Trojan stories, the Pannonian adventures and the warlike competition with the Roman brother people are crucial elements of this tradition. So are the reports on Pharamond and on the origins of the *reges*

5 *DLH*, II, c. 9 and *LHF*, c. 4.

6 H. Wolfram, 'Origo et religio. Ethnic traditions and literature in early medieval texts' in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 70-90.

7 On the possible origins of the Trojan connection in IVth-century diplomatic practice and the specific significance in this respect of emperor Valentinian I and the Frankish king Mallobaudes see Wood, 'Defining the Franks'.

8 This debate is handsomely summarised in two contributions in T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006): Wolfram, 'Origo et religio' and W.A. Goffart, 'Does the distant past impinge on the invasion age Germans?' in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 91-109.

9 See also H.-W. Goetz, 'Gens, kings and kingdoms. The Franks' in: H.-W. Goetz, J. Jarnut and W. Pohl ed., *Regna and gentes. The relationship between late antique and early medieval peoples and kingdoms in the transformation of the Roman world* (Leiden 2003) 307-344; for "applied" strategies of distinction in early medieval historiography see B. Cornford, 'Paul the Deacon's understanding of identity, his attitude to barbarians and his "strategies of distinction" in the Historia Romana' in: R. Corradini et al. ed., *Texts and identities in the Early Middle Ages*. Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 12 (Vienna 2004) 47-60.

crinites, as well as the fabulous account of Merovech being sired by a sea monster, a *quinotaurus*, rather than by his human father Chlodio.[10] These traditions, however, clearly did not have any relationship with distant past realities.[11] Nor were they very ancient as traditions. In the view of Wood, the Trojan tradition probably found its origin in Vth-century Roman diplomatic practice.[12] Of the authors who wrote on *reges crinites* Gregory, working in the later VIth century, is the earliest. In this respect, the case of the VIIth-century Franks provides us with the example of a "diplomatic-literary" tradition which itself was of mainly VIIth-century origin but which yet, by mobilizing ancient themes like the Trojan War, older Roman history and pristine Frankish kingship, presented its audience a virtual historical context to identify with. This may appear to be a vindication of the view of Goffart, who is critical of Wolfram's views on how distant past reality would palpably influence, through myth and its reflection in the *origines gentium*, the Germanic peoples of late antiquity. Myths and *origines gentium* are constructions. Yet this being said, it does not mean that the concepts of ethnogenesis as proposed by Wolfram and further developed by the "Vienna School" would not be helpful when addressing questions of identity.

In fact, in this chapter we will try and find out to what degree elements from the framework of ethnogenesis can be used to construct an interpretational framework of Austrasian identity.

As it was argued in chapter four, the late VIIIth-century *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* contains elements of an *Origo Francorum*, specifically in its use of the work of Dares Phrygius on the fall of Troy, which is one of the *Historia*'s distinctive features. Taking into account the fact that the *Historia* was sponsored by members of Austrasia's leading family and that it has other specific characteristics which strongly suggest an at least partial Austrasian context for the work, the *Historia*'s emphasis on aristocratic rule and on an "Ahnenreihe" of *duces*, as it results from the adoption of Dares' narrative, suggests that in the later VIIIth century

10 Fredegarius, III, c. 9. On royal genealogies see D.N. Dumville, 'Kingship, genealogies and regnal lists' in: P. Sawyer and I.N. Wood ed., *Early Medieval kingship* (Leeds 1977) 72-104. Perhaps the Trojan stories formed a cultural element in the accommodation of the Franks by the (Gallo)Romans; see on accommodation Goffart, W.A., *Barbarians and Romans* (Princeton 1980); Goffart, 'Does the distant past', as well as G. Halsall, 'Movers and shakers. The Barbarians and the fall of Rome' [originally 1997] in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 277-291.

11 On the significance and symbolism of *origines gentis* see A. Plassmann, *Origo gentis. Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Berlin 2006). On the way in which Childeric in the Vth century managed his "publicity": S. Lebecq, 'The two faces of king Childeric. History, archaeology, historiography' in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 327-344.

12 Wood, 'Defining the Franks'.

aristocratic identity had further developed into a regionally anchored collective identity. Whereas in 727 the Neustrian *Liber Historiae Francorum*, being a very "Frankish" narrative, had ideologically settled around kings and kingship in Neustria, in the 770's and 780's the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* reflects the self-consciousness of an aristocratic ruling class which, while emanating from Austrasia, was assertively active throughout the expanding Frankish Kingdom. Throughout the VIIth and into the early VIIIth century, Frankish identity had developed as reflected by Gregory, Fredegar and the *Liber Historiae Francorum*. Now, in the (later) VIIIth century from this basis a broader, ultimately imperial, identity evolved which, although it soon embraced most of *Francia*, yet long kept much of its roots in Austrasia. It is as if the Austrasian "Kulturraum" expanded and came to include the *Regnum Francorum* as a whole. A genesis had taken place between c. 600 and c. 800, which was carried by a blend of Austrasian concepts on kingship, on the sacred and on aristocratic ethics. When we explore this genesis with help of the concepts proposed by Wolfram, our understanding of the process may be enhanced – provided that we keep in mind Goffart's doubts. Whereas the actual, lived-through history of the Austrasians – like that of the Franks in general – remained a relatively short history, we are fully justified when we look for evolution and development in their (historical) self-conception and, through that, in their identity. It is also justified to apply the concepts of ethnogenesis to the development of Austrasianness, specifically the concepts "Traditionskerne" (cores of tradition), "primordial event", "change in religion" and "a common enemy". For a start, the application of this conceptual framework could, in this study of Austrasia, be shifted one notch away from the original approach of Wenskus[13] and Wolfram[14] and later adepts of the "Vienna School" on ethnogenesis, Pohl and Reimitz.[15] For instead of the genesis of an "ethnos", what we have in the Austrasian case appears rather the genesis of a different kind of entity. For indeed, other than in the case of Burgundians/Burgundy or Alemans/Alemania or Frisians/Frisia, in the case of Austrasia we have no ethnic designation for either the group who are called "Austrasians" or their territory, "Austrasia". There was no tribe or people called the "Austrasians". Instead, there were the inhabitants of the lands of Meuse-Sambre, Moselle and Rhine, who came

13 Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*. On „Traditionskerne" see 75 ff.

14 Wolfram, *Das Reich*. In this context see specifically chapter I, 'König, Held und Ursprung des Volkes', 39-64.

15 W. Pohl, 'Strategies of distinction', and W. Pohl, 'Telling the difference, signs of ethnic identity', in: W. Pohl and H. Reimitz ed., *Strategies of distinction. The construction of the ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden 1998), 1-16 and 17-70. W. Pohl, 'Gender and ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages' in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 168-188 (A).

to be called "Austrasians" by 600 and "called themselves Osterliudi" by 800.[16] There may or may not have been a common ethnicity – We could think of a "Ripuarian" ethnicity, but should be aware of the possibility that Ripuarians were ethnically heterogeneous themselves and that, anyway, there never arose a "Ripuaria" – but it probably was not this ethnicity which led to the genesis of the Austrasians.[17] All the same, we have become aware through this study that Austrasians were quite conscious of their common interests as a group and capable of acting decisively on them. We have also seen that they were very committed to the territorial integrity. This suggests that what arose in the period c. 600 – c. 800 was, if not an ethnicity, in any case a community of interests or a commonwealth, which one could perhaps designate with the word "Austrasianness". Instead of ethnogenesis we witness a process of "regiogenesis".[18] The "region" is considered, in this context, as a social concept in a natural and spatial setting.[19] A "Kulturraum" developed which became home to Austrasianness.

Thus, the use of the concepts of ethnogenesis to analyze and interpret the development of Austrasian identity is legitimate – as long as we remain aware that it is not an ethnos but a group identity of a different nature, we are analyzing and interpreting. Regarding the question what circumstances were decisive for the origin of this "Austrasianness", the answer which springs to mind is the fact that Austrasia, vast and important as it was, was still a frontier region – and that much of its territories and inhabitants were situated on the periphery, not only of the *Regnum Francorum* but of Austrasia. The specific dynamics between peripheral groups and territories on the one hand and centralisation processes on the other have been described for Austrasia by Theuws,[20] whose objective was to analyze how society in Northern Austrasia changed through "intensified contacts with the core regions of the Northern Frankish empire".[21] He concludes that between 650 and 750 great changes occurred, when "lines of dependency emerged between

16 *DLH*, V, c. 14 and *AMP*, 4.

17 On ethnicity and ethnic names, see J. Bazelmans, 'The early-medieval use of ethnic names', in: T. Derks and N. Roymans ed., *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity* (Amsterdam 2008), 321-338.

18 H.H. Blotevogel, 'Auf dem Wege zu einer "Theorie der Regionalität". Die Region als Forschungsobjekt der Geographie' in: G. Brunn ed., *Region und Regionsbildung in Europa* (Baden-Baden 2002) 44-68.

19 See on "region": A. Paasi, 'Bounded spaces in a "bounderless world"? Border studies, power and the antomy of the territory', in: Journal of Power (2009) , vol. 2:2, 213-234. B. de Pater and O. Atzema, O. 'Denken over regio's', Bussum 2011, specificaly chapter 6, 'De regio in de culturele geografie', 167-194. Also Blotevogel 2002.

20 Theuws, 'Centre and periphery'.

21 Theuws, 'Centre and periphery', 41.

(outlying regions) and Northern Austrasia".[22] In a general sense, Theuws observes that the "centralising developments in northern Austrasia ... (= the rise of Pippinid power) ...were probably ... determined by the expanding networks of competing elites seeking wealth and power".[23] Various territories which had a relatively autonomous position in the Vth and VIth centuries lost part of this autonomy because of the centralisation which is indicated by the rise of the name Austrasia.[24] The model which Theuws proposes to analyze and interpret the "regiogenesis" in Northern Austrasia would well fit the thought that, although there was no ethnic impulse, the community of interests between the elite groups in the area – combined with the dialectic of periphery and centralisation – was in itself sufficient to trigger the emergence of "Austrasianness".[25]

Recently, Halsall has proposed what amounts to a transcending perspective on – or intellectual complement to – Theuws' model of interacting networks.[26] Addressing what he calls the "Transformations of the year 600" and specifically focussing on Austrasia, Halsall draws attention to developments reflecting these transformations: within the *Regnum Francorum* a shift of focus to the North linked to growth in aristocratic power there (which itself is traceable through the development of monastic foundations); a growing concern for the future becoming evident through increased attention for documents (charters and other legal writings, including codified law like the *Lex Ribuaria*, start to survive from c. 600 onward; significantly, charter forgers have a preference to ascribe their forgeries to Dagobert I rather than to, say, Clovis); an intensified use of the Bible, especially the Old Testament; a certain loss of consent for the state as compared to the VIth century. Halsall also observes a change in historiography. The preponderance of narrative history ends with Gregory of Tours and for the VIIth century we would lack an overarching narrative – which could be linked to a growing orientation on monastic concepts.[27]

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22 Ibidem.

23 Theuws, 'Centre and periphery', 42.

24 Ibidem, 43.

25 A specific study which appears to fit well within Theuws' model was provided by M. Costambeys, 'An aristocratic community on the north Frankish frontier, 690-726', *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1994) 39-62. On the "methodology" of linking conclusions on identity or on migrations to archeology see B. Effros, 'Grave goods and the ritual expression of identity' in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 189-232 and H. Härke, 'Archaeologists and migrations, a problem of attitude?' in: T.F.X. Noble ed., *From Roman provinces to medieval kingdoms* (London and New York 2006) 262-276 respectively.

26 G. Halsall, 'Relating changes in material culture to changes in ideas around 600', CMSA-lecture at University of Amsterdam, 12 September 2012.

27 Ibidem.

The concepts from the paradigm of ethnogenesis can be applied also in the contexts just indicated. This paradigm essentially goes back to Wenskus' work and was later worked out further by Wolfram. Wenskus proposes, in essence, a widely applicable "algorithm" characteristic of ethnogenesis processes. There are three stages – "primordial event", "change of religion", combat against a "primary enemy" – and one set of collective actors, the so-called "Traditionskerne", cores of tradition. In Wolfram's view, the genesis of *gentes*, specifically in late antiquity (Vandals, Goths, Lombard), generally usually follows these lines.
The genesis of Austrasia identity followed these lines, too. It was powered by the dynamics of periphery-centre relationships and developing networks (Theuws), and it was an integral element in the transformation of the VIIth century (Halsall) – witness the Pippinid sponsoring of a *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* on the basis of a "recycled" Fredegar, or legend construction in general – or the self-conscious tone of the Austrasian king regarding the Byzantine Empire in the *Epistolae Austrasicae*.[28]
In the subsequent sections of this chapter the concepts of Wenskus and Wolfram will be applied to the genesis of Austrasian identity. In section two attention will be focussed on groups (families, clans, dynasties) or institutions (kingship, monasteries) eligible for the role of "Traditionskern". In section three attention will be given to the profound consequences of the upheaval of 612/613, when the "Brunhild-branch" of the Merovingians was extinguished by the "Fredegund-branch" and the Austrasians were confronted with the need to adapt themselves to thoroughly changed circumstances. Such a major change may well serve as the kind of "primordial event", as mentioned above. The fourth section will study to what degree a new religious narrative and the effect of the regime change of 612/13 and of new impulses from overseas, effected a change of devotion which would correspond to the concept of a "change of religion". Finally, in section five the significance of missionary ideology will be addressed, specifically from the perspective of Franks and/or Austrasians who defined themselves as champions of orthodoxy, correctness and authority in the face of unruly and insufficiently Christianised Germany, a Germany which in some respects could serve as a "primary enemy" in the sense of the paradigm.

28 Also Halsall, in his lecture quoted before, points out this self-conscious tone of the *Litterae Austrasicae*.

Section 2. "Traditionskerne"

Wenskus' notion of the "Traditionskern", the "core of tradition" which provides the crystallisation point for a process of ethnogenesis, is usually conceived of as referring to a rather narrowly defined leading clan ("Führungsgruppe"),[29] almost always royal or proto-royal. As such, the notion is helpful in interpreting developments in VIIth-century Francia, more specifically the development of kingship as a focus of Neustrian and Austrasian self-definition. Royals with a specific charisma like Balthild in Neustria and Sigebert III provided nuclei of identification. It is not clear how far their radiance spread, but it certainly surpassed the narrow limits of their courts or their direct supporters. Balthild's influence permeated the Neustrian church,[30] Sigebert's misfortune in the Thuringian war still touched the Burgundian Fredegar when he wrote them down some twenty years later[31] and may have contributed to his later legend. Yet in VIIth-century Francia the notion of a "Traditionskern" need not be restricted to a king or his court. First, because the "nuclear potential" of a king could now carry over into the more abstract concept of kingship and in its manifestations like royal foundations. Second, because one did not need to be a king to become the focussing point of a tradition. From c. 600 onward, men like Chagneric at Meaux, Dado/Audoin in north-western Neustria or Romaric in Austrasia can be assumed to represent nuclei of tradition, nuclei which expressed themselves through monastic work. Also, in Austrasia, the Pippinid family could become focus to a fame which spread throughout Europe and lasted for generations.[32] Theuws has shown the mechanism through which also other groups and families in Austrasia contributed to regional awareness. These men, families and groups bequeathed much of their "traditionsbildende" influence to their monastic foundations – Faremoutiers, Rebais, Remiremont, Nivelles, Echternach and others, all monasteries which became "Traditionskerne" in their own right and strengthened this role by producing texts (and identities). Wolfram identified "cores of tradition" with royal "Sippen" in Vth- and VIth-century Germanic successor states.

In my view, the VIIth century in Francia produced traditional cores which consisted of or were linked to non-royal aristocrats and which could enhance their continuity through monastic foundations. That

29 The concept is coined by Wenskus (Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*).

30 *Vita domnae Balthildis*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 2 (Hanover 1888) 475-509, c. 9.

31 Fredegarius, IV, c. 87.

32 On Chagneric: *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 26; on Audoin: *Vita Audoini*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SSRM 5 (Hanover and Leipzig 1910) 536-567; on the Pippinid fame: *Vita Geretrudis,* prologue.

they would wish to do so follows from the fact that the Austrasian elite in the VIth and VIIth centuries was defined not by legalistic definitions of nobility, but by actual power and wealth, including movable wealth.[33] Achieving continuity for the clan was important. Monastic foundations actually helped achieve this. Following the death of Pippin, his widow Itta founded Nivelles[34] and this monastery remained a support for the Pippinids in later years, namely during the difficult period following Grimoald's fall.[35] Grimoald's ally *dux* Adalgisel headed a clan which appears also to have been active in monastic sponsorship.[36] This was the way in which great families developed into cores of tradition while at the same time causing these cores to multiply. *Dux* Vulfoald sponsored Saint-Mihiel, near Verdun.[37] *Dux* Noddo presided over the *translatio* of the body of Arnulf of Metz.[38] Some monastic locations became true focuses fo various clans and their traditions. Echternach, though primarily associated with Plectrudis, was also sponsored by *dux* Theotcharius,[39] who involved with the Alsatian monastery of Weissenburg – as were the *duces* Gundoin[40] and Adalrich Eticho.[41] Founding monasteries conferred and consolidated status. In some cases it may have been comparable to the whitewashing of illegally begotten possessions.

The newly founded monasteries in their turn were very creative in generating tradition – or of generating legend carrying tradition. Amandus' foundation at Elno at the time of the saint's death accommodated Baudemundus, who became executor of Amandus' will and who may have been involved in laying the foundations of the legends making up the various VIIth-century *Vitae Amandi.*[42] Baudemundus may have been one of the first legend constructors who helped shape the Amandus legend we inherited from the VIIIth century. The report, in the various *Vitae Amandi*, of Amandus lifting young Sigebert III from the font may have been created to strengthen the ties between Elno and the kings. In much the same way Milo, the author of the *Vita Amandi II* (c. 850), intended through his narrative to emphasize the ties of Amandus with the papacy.[43] As has been shown, there was much legend

33 Theuws, 'Centre and periphery', 43-44; on family power see also R. Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VIIe-Xe siècle)* (Paris 1995).
34 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 2.
35 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 6.
36 This is based on the assumption that Adalgisel was a kinsman of Adalgisel Grimo. Ebling, *Prosopographie*, V.
37 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCCXIII.
38 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 25.
39 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CCLXXXIX
40 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, CXCIX.
41 Ebling, *Prosopographie*, VIII.
42 *Vita Amandi II*, *Testamentum Amandi episcopi*.
43 *Vita Amandi II,* II, *epistola Martini papae.*

construction going on in VIIIth-century Austrasia.[44] In Austrasia more than in Neustria kingship became entwined with legend construction. Dagobert I's legend remained abortive – almost certainly because the king moved to Neustria and thus called down the *zelus Austrasiorum* upon himself, which did not prevent his memory to become associated, in later days, to that of holy Austrasian women like Irmina of Oeren and Adela of Pfälzel.[45] Not only in this way did Dagobert I's memory remain a "Traditionskern" in itself. In the previous chapter we have seen how he was more or less adopted by the Carolingians as an exemplary king, worthy to imitate. The whole process of tradition-development, often starting with individual or familial charisma (royal or otherwise) and continued through monastic foundations, legend construction and hagiographical fixation of both *topoi* and concepts of authority, correctness and orthodoxy, was to a high degree formative of an Austrasian and – from c. 750 onward – Frankish-imperial identity. Historiography was one specific way for a "Traditionskern" to broadcast its views and concepts. In chapter four we saw that already Fredegar's Chronicle projects the image of a restless and politically articulate Austrasian élite, and that more than a century later the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* adds to this a strong emphasis on the military prowess of the Austrasians.[46] The mere fact that Childebrand and his son Nibelung sponsored the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* and thus intentionally provided a historical context for the new Carolingian kingship is illustrative of how tradition was created to generate legitimacy.[47] The same intention is even more explicit in the *Annales Mettenses Priores*. Thus, historiography bestows venerability on the Carolingians (and in retrospect the Pippinids), creating a tradition just through the narrative it provides. Fredegar and even more so the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* also show some inclination to construct a "long history" when they claim Trojan and Roman origins, yet it appears that the authors themselves did not emphasize these claims very strongly. The developments in contemporary, VIIth- and VIIIth-century narratives on Austrasia and specifically their focussing on tradition-shaping reflect their new purpose: rather than providing the overarching narrative for an empire in transformation, which was still fairly common in the VIth century,[48]

44 Legend was also constructed in Neustria, witness the *Gesta Dagoberti I*, composed at Saint Denis in the first third of the VIIIth century. This Neustrian legend, however, is intended to justify the claims and possessions of Saint Denis, whereas the "Austrasian" Lives are rather "powered" by missionary zeal.

45 Werner, *Adelsfamilien*, 49-60.

46 Chapter 4, section 3.

47 Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*.

48 G. Halsall, 'Relating changes in material culture to changes in ideas around 600', CMSA-lecture at University of Amsterdam, 12 September 2012.

the narratives (historiographical and hagiographic) provide legend and identity to families, groups, regions. The narratives on Austrasia pass on tradition within the Northeast of the *Regnum Francorum* and, towards 800, within the Carolingian Empire – with the kings and the elite as its bearers. In this process, the shift from an Austrasian to a broader context appears to have coincided, not surprisingly, with the rule of Charlemagne.[49] Contemporary historiography confirms this. The *Annales Mettenses Priores* (c. 805) use as a matter of fact, next to the term *Osterliudi*,[50] both "Austrasia" and"Austrasians" as identifiers.[51] The *Annales regni Francorum* still use the term "Austrasians", but already in an ambiguous way and only in their first part up to and including the entry for 778.[52] Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni* does not show any longer traces of the old distinction between Neustrians and Austrasians and specifically does away with what remained of tributary respect towards the Merovingians.

The Carolingian dynasty and the network of elite groups of which it formed the apex provided the carrier wave of tradition which pervaded the empire. The crucial (but by far not the sole) node and transmitter of this tradition became the Carolingian court. To a large extent, it had its geographical centre of gravity at Aachen. It is important to point out that, by the time Charlemagne became emperor, (the genesis of) an Austrasian identity, or region, was a thing of the past. It would not be long before a new distinction between Western and Eastern "Franks" was to gradually gain importance. Rather than the centre of a people or a nation, the court at Aachen around 800 was the nucleus of an empire. As such, Aachen had become the tangible expression of an imperial attitude and awareness which permeated the Carolingian élite.[53]

This attitude and awareness had taken shape through a process of Austrasian aristocrats developing a set of notions, ideas and values which we have been able to follow throughout this study. Throughout this process Austrasian "Traditionskerne" served as anchor points for the developing of these ideas and values. The late VIth-century Austrasian court of Sigebert I and his successors (including Brunhild) was such a nucleus. Following the upheaval of 612/613 the Pippinid family

49 See also: K. Düwel, 'Epigrafische Zeugnisse für die Macht der Schrift im östlichen Frankenreich' in: A. Wieczorek, U. Koch and C. Braun ed., *Die Franken, Wegbereiter Europas. Vor 1500 Jahren König Chlodwig und seine Erben* (Mainz 1996) 540-552.

50 *AMP*, *s.a.* 688.

51 *AMP*, 20, 32 (Austrasia) and 21 (Austrasians, twice).

52 *Annales regni Francorum* in the entry under 778 mention the *Franci Austrasiorum*, a combination which would have been unthinkable for the author of the *LHF*. In the entry for 775 the *Austreleudi* and *Austrasii* appear to be put on the same footing as the Saxons and they provide hostages as a warrant for peace.

53 J.L. Nelson, 'Aachen as a place of power", in: in: F.C.J.W. Theuws, M.B. de Jong en C. van Rijn ed., *Topographies of power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden 2001), 217-241.

provided another nucleus and from the 640's onward their role as such was strengthened and multiplied by monastic foundations that began to broadcast ideology: Elno, Nivelles, Lobbes, Stavelot-Malmédy and Echternach are cases in point. The process was much wider than just the Pippinid or other court-related networks. Throughout the region, within a dynamic between periphery and centre, Austrasian elite networks developed into carriers of tradition, of "Austrasianness". Austrasian aristocrats developed a specific identity. Historiography from Fredegar through Einhard increasingly reflected this in its dealing with the relation between aristocracy and kingship. Hagiography constructed a missionary mandate matching the late VIIIth-century aristocratic processing of religious impulses which had permeated Austrasia from c. 600 onward. It all suggests strongly a process of developing Austrasian identity – which widened and changed in character after Tertry (687), when Austrasian aristocrats dispersed throughout the *Regnum Francorum* and when their set of values and ideas discharged into the imperial ideology of the Carolingian élite. In the end, it was not an *ethnos* which resulted, but a mind-set which strongly influenced later history.

Section 3. Primordial event; 612/613

According to the aforementioned Vienna algorithm of ethnogenesis, generally a primordial event is instrumental as a catalyst within the gestation process of a new *ethnos*. In the case of the VIIth-century genesis of Austrasian identity such an event may readily be found in the upheaval of 612/613, when heavy war, violent dynastic change and blind fatality confronted the Austrasians with revolutionised circumstances.
In May 612 Theuderic II of Burgundy started a war against his brother Theudebert II of Austrasia. Both were grandsons of Sigebert I of Austrasia and his queen Brunhild. The long-widowed Brunhild, driven from Austrasia, had in recent years stayed at the Burgundian court, where she had set up Theuderic against Theudebert. Theuderic had bought the neutrality of his great-nephew Chlothar II of Neustria by promising to cede to him the duchy of Dentelin after he, Theuderic, would have been victorious.
At Toul Theuderic's army beat Theudebert's and "cut it to pieces".[54] Theudebert of Austrasia fled through Metz (to take his treasure) and across the Vosges and reached Cologne. There he gathered "all the Saxons,

54 Fredegarius, IV, c. 38; ... *eiusque exercitum prostrauit* ...

Thuringians and other peoples from across the Rhine and elsewhere"[55] into a new fighting force. Probably in the fall of the year 612 the two kings and their armies met again, this time at Zülpich. The ensuing battle was tremendous. "It is said that from time immemorial no such battle had ever been fought by the Franks and other peoples; the carnage on both sides was such that in the fighting line there was no room for the slain to fall down. They stood upright in their ranks, corpse supporting corpse, as if they still lived".[56] In the end, Theudebert's army was beaten and his warriors were killed off in pursuit all the way from Zülpich to Cologne. "The whole countryside was strewn with their bodies", says Fredegar. Theudebert himself fled across the Rhine, but not long afterwards was captured and taken to Chalon. He was killed not many days afterwards.[57] His infant son Merovech was killed, too.[58] Theuderic now was king of both Burgundy and Austrasia (end of 612 or beginning of 613).
In the meantime, Chlothar II, mindful of Theuderic II's promise, had occupied the Dentelin region. Theuderic, reneging on the arrangement, sent an embassy to Chlothar with an ultimatum for him to give up Dentelin. When Chlothar did not comply with this, Theuderic brought together an army to march into the West (613). The march had already started when Theuderic II, staying at Metz, suddenly died of dysentery. Theuderic's sudden death surprised his followers in both Austrasia and Burgundy.[59] The troops left immediately for their homes now that the king to whom they owed their fealty was no more.[60] Brunhild found herself at Metz when her grandson died. There, she had the four sons of Theuderic in her custody.[61] The old queen exerted herself to get a new king recognized as soon as possible. She set up the eldest boy, eleven years old, as Sigebert II.[62] However, following the unexpected death of Theuderic II, a sudden movement took place in Austrasia, which soon undid the efforts of Brunhild and her followers to arrange a smooth succession within the "Burgundian" branch of the dynasty. What happened is best reported in the words of Fredegar: *... Chlotharius factione Arnulfo et Pippino uel citeris procerebus Auster ingreditur*, "Chlothar was incited by the faction

55 Ibidem; *...cum Saxonis, Thoringus uel cetras gentes que de ultra Renum uel undique...*
56 Ibidem; *Fertur a Francorum ceterasque gentes ab antiquito sic forte nec aliquando fuisse prilium conceptum. Ibique tantae estrages ab uterque exercitus facta est, ubi falange in congresso certamenis contra se priliabant, caduera occisorum undique non haberint ubi inclinis iacerint, sed stabant mortui inter citerorum cadauera stricti quasi uiuentes.*
57 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 28.
58 Fredegarius, IV, c. 38.
59 According to Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 29, Metz was burning around the king when he died. This may be an indication of tumultuous events. Jonas is the oldest surviving source on the circumstances of the death of Theuderic.
60 Fredegarius, IV, c. 38-39.
61 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40.
62 Ibidem.

of Arnulf, Pippin and other magnates to enter Austrasia".[63] It is clear from this that Chlothar enters Austrasia (with an army, of course): *Chlothar ... Auster ingreditur*. But what are "Arnulf" and "Pippin" (or their factions) and "the other magnates" doing? There is no verb indicating any action by them, there is only the *ablativus* indicating that something (the entering of Austrasia by Chlothar) is taking place "through" them, "by" them – or "with them". As it stands, the sentence may mean that Chlothar entered Austrasia on the invitation of, or with the help from, Arnulf's and Pippin's factions and other magnates. Chlothar and his army marched east to Andernach on the Rhine, where the king was met with ambassadors sent by Brunhild requesting him to leave the kingdom which the late Theuderic had left to his sons (... *quem filiis reliquerat*). Elsewhere we already discussed Chlothar's answer referring to a "gathering of Franks".[64] This answer did not, of course, satisfy Brunhild. She sent young Sigebert II across the Rhine to mobilize once again support among the '*gentes que ultra Rhenum*'. But the Burgundian mayor of the palace Warnachar betrayed Sigebert and Brunhild and went over to Chlothar.[65] Part of the Austrasians, too, supported Warnachar.[66] Sigebert II's army deserted him. This decided the outcome. Three of the four sons of the late Theuderic were made prisoner – Sigebert, Corbus and Merovech –, ten-year old Childebert escaped and was never heard from again. Sigebert and Corbus were killed. Chlothar spared Merovech because he had stood godfather to the child. Brunhild was taken prisoner and was cruelly executed. Following all this, Fredegar yet finds the words which make his description of the outcome of the upheavals read almost as a "happy ending": "Warnachar became mayor of the palace in Burgundy after Chlothar had sworn that he should never be deposed ... and Rado obtained the corresponding dignity in Austrasia. The entire Frankish kingdom was united as it once had been under the first Chlothar ...".[67] Yet the ending was less happy than it seemed and questions remained. In Burgundy, the rule of Chlothar was soon to be confronted with unrest and with rival claims to the throne.[68] No further mention is made of the "gathering of the Franks" of which Chlothar had spoken. It is quite possible that it was never held, at least not in Austrasia. On the situation there it is useful to quote Schneider, who writes: "(Chlothar II kam) auf

63 Ibidem.
64 Ibidem.
65 Fredegarius, IV, c. 41.
66 Fredegarius, IV, c. 42.
67 Ibidem; *Warnacharius in regnum Burgundiae subsituetur maior domi, sacramentum a Chlotharium acceptum ne umquam uitae suae temporebus degradaretur. In Auster Rado idemque hoc gradum honoris adsumpsit. Firmatum est omnem regnum Francorum sicut a priorem Chlotharium fuerat dominatum ...*
68 Fredegarius, IV, c. 43-44.

betreiben der austrasischen Großen ... nach Austrasien und bezog sich ... ganz eindeutig auf das Interesse der Großen. Einem *iudicium Francorum electorum* wollte er die Frage nach der Rechtmäßigkeit der Herrschaft überlassen und sich ihren Entscheidung unterwerfen. Das heißt aber, daß (er ...) seinen Herrschaftsanspruch ... vom Willen der Großen ... abhängig zu machen gewollt war". The suggestion that Chlothar, through acquiescing in the eventual outcome of a gathering of "elected Franks", would hand over part of his sovereignty to Austrasia's magnates, is as such sufficient to allow the conclusion that there were to be problems in Austrasia one way or the other: either when the gathering was held – and would assert its powers; or when it was cancelled, and the cancellation would sour the relationship between the king and his Austrasian *leudes*. There are indications that the outcome of the war was a deception to many Austrasians, maybe not least to Arnulf and Pippin, who disappear into shadow for the period 613-622 and may well have felt cheated of the fruits of their support for Chlothar. Why were they not rewarded in the way Warnachar was? Chlothar's new mayor of the palace in Austrasia, Rado, may have been a Neustrian. His name suggests a possible connection with the same area (upper Seine- and Oise-valleys) and family-environment as Audoin's.[69] If he was a Neustrian, Austrasians will have felt ambiguous about him. Some years later, c. 617, a certain Chucus (Hugus) was mayor of the palace in Austrasia.[70] We cannot even guess at his background, but there are certainly indications that he was not popular in Austrasia. In 617 he stood more or less on the same footing as the mayors of Neustria and Burgundy (Gundeland and Warnachar, respectively) and was considered with them as one of the men from whom king Chlothar took council – but Fredegar makes explicit mention of the three men's venality.[71] Moreover, in the *Vita Arnulfi* he is said to have acquired a silver dish from the *thesaurus* of bishop Arnulf, having paid only just enough for it to provide some alms to the poor, and having died soon afterwards "because almighty God would not suffer that this dish, which of old had been consecrated to Saint Stephen the first of martyrs, would be used by a layman".[72] Obviously the mayor was not highly regarded by Arnulf (or at least by the author of Arnulf's *Vita*). The possible Neustrian background of Chlothar's first *maiordomus* Rado and the apparent unpopularity (greediness) of the second one, Chucus, will have caused irritation. This may be one reason why the *Vita Arnulfi* is

69 see Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 138-139; The *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 26 and the *Vita Audoini* give the names of the three sons of the prominent magnate from Soissons, Audecharius as: Ado, Dado and Rado.

70 Fredegarius, IV, c. 45.

71 Ibidem.

72 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 14; *Sed omnipotens Deus non passus est, ut illo laicus frueretur, qui in honore beati Stephani protomartiris iam olim consecratus fuisset ...*

ostensibly silent both about Arnulf's role in inviting Chlothar to Austrasia as well as about Arnulf's role as a counselor to the king. Then there was the fact that Chlothar ruled his realm of three kingdoms from the Île-de-France, mostly from Paris (also apparent in the *Vita Arnulfi*[73]). There are no indications that he ever visited Austrasia again after 613/614. As a result, the Austrasians – having lost their own Merovingians – lacked access to Chlothar II.

Yet in 622/23, Chlothar made young Dagobert *consors regni* in Austrasia. Access of the Austrasian great to a Merovingian king was restored. Pippin emerges as *maiordomus*[74] and also Arnulf re-enters the stage as Dagobert's educator and counselor. As the *Vita Arnulfi*'s author, probably an Austrasian monk,[75] has it: "He (Arnulf) strengthened his (Dagobert's) intellect to such an extent that, as they say, there had never been a king similar to him in the Sicambrian nation".[76] The passage appears to echo the report of Fredegar on the Austrasian rule of Dagobert: "... and thus (he) ruled Austrasia so prosperously that he earned unlimited praise of all peoples (and) he ruled his subjects so happily and with such regard for justice that none of his predecessors as king of the Franks earned more praise than he".[77] The accounts of both the *vita Arnulfi* and of Fredegar's Chronicle reflect the satisfaction of the Austrasians with Dagobert having become "their" king in Metz.

The accounts by Fredegar and in the *Vita Arnulfi* suggest that the upheaval of 612/13 and its consequences brought about profound changes in the Austrasian policy, changes which – we may assume – were reflected in the way Austrasian aristocrats perceived kingship and their position in relation to it. After Chlothar II's take-over they found themselves, for the first time in more than half a century, without an accessible king of their own. The first ten years the new king ruled from the île de France through mayors who may have been Neustrian and/or lacked support among the Austrasians. Native leaders appear eclipsed. It was the kind of situation which would bring about a sense of oppositional solidarity among an élite

73 Ibidem. At Hugus' sudden death the vessel fell to king Chlothar who, as soon as he heard that it had once belonged to Arnulf, ordered it to be sent "at Metz, to the holy bishop". Obviously both the king and Hugus were not at or near Metz at the time.

74 Fredegarius, IV, c. 52.

75 *Vita Arnulfi*, 428, Krusch' Introduction to the *Vita Arnulfi*.

76 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 16 (my translation); *… ita altissima et profunda erudivit sapientia, ut in Secambrorum nacione rex nullus illi similis fuisse narraretur.*

77 Fredegarius, IV, c. 58; as I did throughout this study, I give the translation of Wallace-Hadrill. Which, however, works somewaht forced in this instance. Also, it seems to do no justice to the terms used by Fredegar: *gentes* is not adequately translated by "subjects". *... tante prosperetatis regale regimen in Auster regebat ut a cunctis gentibus immenso ordine laudem haberit. … tantae prosperitatis et iustitiae amore conplexus uniuersas sibi subditas gentes ... regebatur ut nullus de Francorum regibus precedentibus suae laudis fuisset precellentior.*

which had always been activist and used to taking care of their own and – judging from the general sense of relief at the installation of Dagobert at Metz – such solidarity did indeed develop. When Dagobert in his turn left Austrasia for Neustria in 628 the process repeated itself in and opposition intensified: we hear about a *zelus Austrasiorum* threatening even Pippin,[78] about sabotaging a campaign against the Thuringians and other conflictuous developments[79] which only ended when the Austrasians once more received a proper king. Then and only then did they accept responsibility for their own affairs – at a time when the Neustrians made clear that they, too, preferred to maintain a separation between kingship in the East and in the West.[80]

To conclude this section on the "primordial event" constituted by the régime change of 612/13, we should briefly address its consequences for legislation, which also contributed to the development of an Austrasian identity. Legislation, royal or otherwise, forms an aspect of identity closely akin to religion in its effects on moral culture. Following Wood's hypothesis on the origin of *Lex Ribuaria*, implying that it "is possible ... to find a context for the issuing of *Lex Ribuaria* in the aftermath of Chlothar's take-over of Austrasia in 613, when he was concerned to secure support in the new territories, or ten years later when he set up an eastern sub-kingdom for his son Dagobert I",[81] we propose that law-making, too, became part of the redefinition of Austrasian self-conception.[82] This would be the case even more if we accept as an indicator also Wood's suggestion that "the evidence of the Ripuarian, Alaman and Bavarian law-codes suggests that the reigns of Chlothar II and Dagobert I constituted a remarkable period in the compilation and revision of legislation, but it has to be said that the evidence is of uncertain worth".[83] When put in the perspective of the changes described before, however, Wood's appreciation of the evidence may find some corroboration. The geographic backgrounds of each of the three law codes he mentions – Ripuarian, Bavarian and Alemannian – are all compatible with interpreting them as expressions of great change in the East and along the Eastern frontier of the *Regnum Francorum*.

The possibility that the developments of 612/13 and the following years in

78 Fredegarius, IV, c. 61.

79 Fredegarius, IV, c. 68, 74 and 75.

80 Fredegarius, IV, c. 76.

81 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 116. References are to Fredegarius, IV, c. 43 and 47. Wood adds: "Equally, Dagobert himself may have been responsible for the *Lex Ribuaria*".

82 According to Mordek it is probable that the Thuringian duke Heden the Elder (after 643 – after 676?) contributed to the promulgation of *Lex Ribuaria*, Mordek, 'Die Hedenen als politische Kraft'. If true, this would make a role for Chlothar II († 629) less plausible, but it would in no way be incompatible with the *Lex* belonging in a context "in the aftermath of Chlothar's take-over". Wood points out that *Lex Ribuaria* is "the most ostentatiously Christian of al the pre-Carolingian law codes" (Wood, *The missionary life*, 10).

83 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 117.

Austrasia contributed to a growing and ever more distinct sense of identity is corroborated by parallel changes in Austrasia's religious narrative – through the adoption of new forms of worship and devotion, the expansion of a specific monasticism and the construction of legend and ideology.

Section 4. Change of devotion

A religious narrative with specific Austrasian traits first expressed itself in the *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis* and its appendix, the *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano* (both from c. 670).[84] Also, the Lives of Arnulf (shortly before 700) and of Amatus, Romaric and Adelphius (shortly after 700) provide a perspective on the Austrasian ways of worship.[85] These texts allow us to at least sense the tonality of religious life in the Northeast of the *Regnum Francorum* in the VIIth and early VIIIth centuries. Not much later, this tonality was to be complemented by a missionary ideology. First, however, we have to focus on the narrative as it developed in Austrasia before the missionary perspective came to colour much of it. In VIIth-century Francia, the religious narrative is mainly represented by hagiography. If we look at VIIth-century Lives from the point of view of the genesis of identity and consequently apply to them questions on such identity, the main clue provided to answer them appears to be the relationship between the saint (or the author of his Life) on the one hand and secular powers and politics – royal or otherwise – on the other. Applying this perspective, we find a difference in colouring between Neustrian and Austrasian Lives. Whereas VIIth-century Neustrian Lives like the *Passio Leudegarii* (c.680), the *Vita Domnae Balthildis* (c. 685), the *Passio Praejecti Episcopi et Martyri Arverni* (c. 680) and the *Acta Aunemundi* (later VIIth century) appear to derive much of their protagonist's sacred standing from his or her conflict with secular powers[86] – or at least, as in the case of the *Vita Audoini Episcopi*

84 *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis* and *Additamentum de Fuilano*.

85 *Vita Arnulfi*; *Vitae Amati, Romarici, Adelphii abbatum Habendensium*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SSRM 4 (Hanover and Leipzig 1902) 208-229.

86 The narrative on Leodegar is centered around his martyrdom, which was inflicted upon him by Ebroin (*Passio Leudegarii*, c. 26-35). Balthild, although herself a queen and once a powerful regent in Neustria and Burgundy, derives her true saintliness from her meek acceptance of monastic life after having been deposed in a conflict with Frankish magnates probably led by Ebroin (*Vita domnae Balthildis,* c. 10). Praejectus was murdered following the change of government after Childeric II' assassination (*Passio Praejecti*, c. 26-30). The essence of the *Acta Aunemundi* is the bishops' martyrdom at the hand of henchmen sent on behalf of king Chlothar III and/or the kings' mother, queen-regent Balthild (*Acta Aunemundi*, c. 9).

Rotomagensis (c. 700), detach the protagonist's legend from his actual involvement, in his lifetime, with government and the court[87] –, in Austrasia VIIth-century hagiography suggests much more of a synergy between saintliness and politics. In the *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis* we may observe, first, the author's frankness on the fact that his motives for writing are not purely hagiographical; he also wishes to draw attention to the exalted position of Gertrudis' family in suggesting that this position is known to all in Europe.[88] Also, as we already saw, the Life is quite explicit on political matchmaking.[89] In addition, it is the only surviving source which alludes, without too much reticence, to the problems to which the Pippinids were subject following Grimoald's fall. It reports that abbess Vulfetrudis of Nivelles (she was Grimoald's daughter) was pursued by the jealousy of kings, queens and even bishops '*ex odio paterno*' – but it also joyfully reports that "those who before, because of their greed, acted as robbers and accusers, later on proved themselves, through magnanimity and donations, defenders (of the monastery)".[90] Thus the *Vita* emphasises that even the crisis following Grimoald's fall did not really disturb the relation between Gertrudis' and Vulfetrudis' Nivelles and kingship. Another VIIth-century source mentioning Nivelles in Gertrudis' time is the *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano* which tells us as a matter of course how mayor of the palace Grimoald came to his sister's monastery "to visit the holy places"[91] (on the political relevance of this specific visit of 650 see chapter two, section four). The life of Arnulf, which is a generation or so younger, constructs an even stronger tie between the saintly protagonist and secular authority and kingship, even to the point of omitting conflictuous situations (612/613)[92] from the narrative or downplaying them (the conflict with Dagobert in preceding Arnulf's

87 The fact that the author of Audoin's Life spends so much of his attention on the saint's death, his burial and the translation of his body reflects, in my view, a conscious choice to detach Audoin's memory from the political pragmatism with which he had been involved during his long life. In this respect I ascribe to the author a more active "agenda" than do Fouracre and Gerberding (see Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France*, 134).

88 *Vita Geretrudis*, prologue: *Quisnam in Euruppa habitans, (istius) progenie altitudinem, nomina ignorat et loca?*

89 Chapter IV, section 4; *Vitae Geretrudis*, c. 1.

90 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 6. … *et ita ei Deus gratiam suam contulit, ut qui antea per cupiditatem raptores atque accusatores fuerunt, postea vero largitate et beneficiis extiterunt defensores.*

91 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano.*

92 The *Vita Arnulfi* does not refer in any way to the events of 613, when Arnulf and Pippin invited Chlothar II of Neustria to intervene in Austrasia.

departure from court in 629).[93] In this narrative, composed some seventy years after Arnulf's death, the protagonist is represented as a loyal and trusted advisor to the subsequent kings of Austrasia. The Life recounts how, when still a young man, Arnulf became a '*domesticus adque consiliarius regis*' to Theudebert II.[94] Next it is reported how Chlothar II favoured Arnulf in the matter of the silver dish (see above, section three). Also, we learn how Arnulf, having become counselor to Dagobert I when the latter was made king in Austrasia (622/23), "strengthened his (Dagobert's) intellect to such an extent that, as they say, there had never been a king similar to him in the Sicambrian nation".[95] Truly the narrative ties saintliness and kingship together. Ultimately, the adoption of Arnulf into the pedigree of the Carolingians, as it was constructed by Paul the Deacon in his *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus* (c. 785)[96] may, in a certain respect, be seen as a late consequence of the conceived synergy between saintliness and kingship.

Thus, a specific and essentially positive exchange of power between the spheres of the sacred and of politics appears characteristic of the (religious and/or) hagiographic narrative as it developed in VIIth-

93 The account in the *Vita Arnulfi* (c. 17-19) at this point is obscure and this is probably on purpose. According to the *Vita*, Arnulf announced to Dagobert his intention to withdraw into ascetic life (*ad heremum*). It will have been after Chlothar II's death, when Dagobert was succeeding to the whole of the *Regnum Francorum*. At the bishop's announcement, the king became very angry at him (*iratus adversus eum*), to the point where he threatened to kill Arnulf's sons and drew his sword. One of the king's magnates (*unus procerum*) intervened and restrained Dagobert (*Noli impie contra temet ipsum agere ...*). An intermezzo concerning the queen intervening on Arnulf's behalf must be seen as a *topos*, but "realism" returns when the narrative describes how Arnulf, having gotten his release and when leaving the palace is waited for by an untold multitude (*innumeram multitudinem*) loudly protesting his departure. The *Vita* reports that Romaric, residing in the loneliness of the Vosges and hearing that Arnulf had been succeeded as bishop (by Goeric), came to Metz to fetch Arnulf. While Romaric and his companions were waiting in the city a fire erupted in a royal storehouse (*prumtuarium regis*) and they ran to Arnulf's place and tried to convince him to flee with them: they told him that they had horses ready (*egredere, domne, hecce ... adsunt pro foribus equi nostri*), yet Arnulf did not flee before first performing a praying miracle to avert from the city the danger of a general conflagration. After finally accompanying them, Arnulf settled in the Vosges and things apparently calmed down. In my view, the whole episode is pervaded with paradox. That there was conflict between Dagobert and Arnulf is clear. That this conflict caused the bishop's departure from court seems probable. Yet such a conflict would not fit in well with what was deemed "politically correct" in Austrasia in c. 700 – unless it would have been caused by the king's lack of empathy in the face of Arnulf's unwavering faith.

94 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 7.

95 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 16; *… ita altissima et profunda erudivit sapientia, ut in Secambrorum nacione rex nullus illi similis fuisse narraretur.*

96 *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus (Gesta episcoporum Mettensium)*, ed. G. Pertz, MGH SS 2 (Hanover 1829) 260-268, 264; see also: H. Reimitz, 'Social networks and Identities in Frankish Historiography New aspects of the textual history of Gregory of Tours', in: R. Corradini, M. Diesenberger and H. Reimitz ed., *The construction of communities in the Early Middle Ages. Texts, resources and artefacts* (Leiden 2003), 229-268, specifically 265-266.

century Austrasia. We have also seen it in the Life of Romaric, where there is more than a hint at a special relationship between Romaric and the *subregulus* Grimoald (see above, chapter two, section four).[97] Even in the brief Life of Amatus, with its mainly transcendental orientation, the author – probably the same as the author of the Life of Arnulf[98] – goes out of his way to suggest a link between Amatus and Dagobert I.[99] And he is careful to draw attention to the fact that Romaric, before Amatus persuaded him to become a monk, was an important dignitary *in palacio.*[100]

There is a parallelism between, on the one hand, Austrasian hagiography's positive connection between a saint's life and the political sphere and, on the other hand, the relationship between kingship and sanctity which in Austrasia was rather stronger than elsewhere in the *Regnum Francorum*. In fact, the grammar of kingship and the grammar of sanctity absorbed elements from each other – a process which can be observed from the way the Life of Columbanus associates a king's moral standing with the fortune or misfortune of his kingdom,[101] or – conversely – in the brazen annexation into Amandus' legend of the baptism of Sigebert III. This was discussed in chapter three. Hagiography and legend construction provide the paradigm within which a specific Austrasian blend of Christianity took shape throughout the VIIth and much of the VIIIth centuries. This process represents a change of devotion which, to a degree, corresponds with the "change of religion" from the Vienna algorithm.

The causes of this change in devotion are multiple. They form a complex of interdependent and intertwined forces, difficult to reconstruct, among which, however, some elements may be identified as plausible causal factors. Two of these are the effects of the régime change of 612/613 and the overseas influences which permeated Austrasia in the years following this change.

The régime change was, as such, a process which had little to do with religion – but in its context ecclesiastical matters may have played a role. The war which led up to the change at first sight had little or nothing to do with religious factors – but rather a number of religious dignitaries figure in the various narrative about the struggle. Theuderic II, during the 612 campaign in the course of which he defeated and killed his brother, met

97 *Vita Romarici*, c. 8.

98 I.N. Wood, 'Forgery in Merovingian hagiography' in: *Fälschungen im Mittelalter V. Internazionaler Kongreß der Monumenta Germaniae Historica – München 16-19 Sept. 1986* (Hanover 1988) 369-384.

99 *Vita Amati*, c. 2; Krusch, Introduction to *Vitae Amati, Romarici, Adelphii abbatum Habendensium*, points out that Amatus was already near to death when Dagobert became king.

100 *Vita Amati*, c. 7.

101 For the reasons why I feel that the Life of Columbanus is particularly relevant for kingship in Austrasia, see chapter III, subsection 3.1.

with bishop Leudegasius of Mainz,[102] who may only shortly before have been (a reluctant?[103]) host to Columbanus.[104] Theuderic's meeting with the bishop came at a time when "Ripuarians" met with the victorious king and probably accepted him, in a more or less formal way, as their ruler.[105] Then there is Columbanus himself, who had met with Chlothar II of Neustria and Theudebert II of Austrasia shortly before[106] and then moved on to Bregenz and later to Italy, out of harm's way, so to speak. Also we have bishop Aridius of Lyons who, when Theuderic had won the war joined the king and his mother in the conquered city of Metz.[107] Aridius is, of course, associated with the martyrdom of Desiderius of Vienne.[108] And it was bishop Arnulf of Metz who, together with Pippin, called Chlothar II into Austrasia. Following all this ecclesiastical involvement in matters political we next see that Chlothar in 614 combined his gathering of the great at Paris with a synod of Francia's bishops.

What was at stake for all these bishops? It is impossible to reconstruct their exact incentives, goals or expectancies. But we may, by reminding ourselves of some of the facts we do know, work towards a suggestion of what motivated some stakeholders. We know that Columbanus had to flee Burgundy. We also know that he met Chlothar II and Theudebert II before moving on to Bregenz (and we can only speculate on what this meeting contributed to the war which was soon to follow), having a – maybe not too friendly – encounter along the way with (probably) Leudegasius of Mainz.[109] Leudegasius and Aridius were bishops who associated with Theuderic II during the war but had to redefine their position following their patron's sudden death and the take-over by Chlothar II, which was sponsored by (among others) bishop Arnulf – who was later on to opt for the life of a monk in a Columbanian inspired tradition. All this would be consistent with – yet not proof of – a decisive move, in Austrasia, to a more "Columbanian" perspective on faith and church, which subsequently was consolidated by the 614 synod and set the scene for the spiritual development in Austrasia in subsequent times.[110]

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102 Fredegarius, IV, c. 38. See also Wallace-Hadrill's footnote in *Chronicle of Fredegar* on that same page.

103 The account in the *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 27 suggests that the bishop of Mainz did not immediately welcome Columbanus when he arrived at the city, nor that his providing the travellers with victuals came about spontaneously.

104 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 27.

105 *LHF*, 38. The narrative speaks about Theuderic entering the *terra Riboariense* and tells about the people of the land coming to Theuderic to ask him to further spare their country, "for we are already yours", *iam tui sumus*.

106 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 27.

107 *Vita Romarici*, 3.

108 Fredegarius, IV, c. 32; *Vita Romarici*, c. 2; *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 27.

109 See Bullough, 'The career of Columbanus', specifically 19, footnote 37.

110 Aridius was present at Paris in 614. No bishop of Mainz is recorded at the occasion.

Elements which may have led up to this change of perspective have already been traced throughout this study. It was probably not long after Chlotharius' takeover that the monks of Luxeuil (during the abbacy of Eustatius) sent Amatus to "certain places in Austrasia" in order that these places "would profit from his piety; for the gift of preaching lived strongly in him".[111] It sounds like (re)Christianisation – and (parts of) Austrasia may have needed that. Austrasians will have remembered the visit by Columbanus in 611 and the preaching from Luxeuil probably fell in fertile earth. The fact that at the new monastic foundation of Amatus and Romaric, Remiremont, the practice of *laus perennis* was introduced meant an innovation for Austrasia and suggests, apart from influence of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune, a connection between Remiremont and (Austrasian) kingship; for it seems that *laus perennis* was a specific attribute of monasteries with strong royal connections. Dagobert I introduced *laus perennis* at Saint-Denis.[112] Another element of the new spiritual development in Austrasia was the religious colonisation of the wilderness. With Remiremont, Elno and later on Cugnon and Stavelot-Malmédy, we have examples of deserted places becoming centres of authority – as had been the case with Columbanus' Annegray and Luxeuil.

The first biography of Amandus (before legends were added), which refers to his activities as an itinerant bishop and to his transmarine connections,[113] is consistent with the idea that new religious influences were entering the Northeast of the *Regnum Francorum* in the period following the régime change in 613. His founding of Elno and the glimpse we have of his work in the Scheldt and Scarpe area[114] also fit in. It was during these years that in Austrasia a synergy developed between the zeal of monks and *peregrini* on the one hand and worldly – often (semi)royal – authority on the other, a development reflected in Austrasia's religious narrative, as we saw above. The monastic development in Austrasia during the greater part of the VIIth century led, in the end, to a monastic topography – one might almost say ecology – proclaiming aristocratic and royal power throughout the land. It also led to a revitalisation of the church's structure, through providing it with a new monastic framework. This development went hand in hand with an increasing tendency to construct legend and ideology. When, in the course of the later VIIth and VIIIth centuries, the saintly legends were constructed as was described in chapter three, it came naturally to the legend constructors

111 *Vita Amati,* c. 6. … *directus a fratribus, ut quasdam urbes Austrasiorum lustraret; multa enim gratia predicationis in illo vigebat.*

112 Fredegarius, IV, c. 79.

113 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 4;*Vita Amandi I*, c. 9; *Vita Columbani*, prologue and *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 2.

114 *Vita Columbani*, prologue.

to shape the account of the deploying monastic ecology in terms of missionary effort which in their time was ever more strongly determining religious outlooks. The resulting missionary ideology, as an essential yet paradoxical part of the Austrasian identity, will be discussed in the next section.

The exchange of influences between narrative and changing spiritual environment was not only visible in hagiography. Historiography, too, became more Christianised. Whereas the Chronicle of Fredegar and the *Liber Historiae Francorum* both kept a certain distance to religion and the church[115] – certainly when compared to the Ten Books of Histories by the VIth-century bishop of Tours –, the *Annales Mettenses Priores* leans heavily on the Old Testament – both in its metaphors and in its atmosphere in general.[116] When we look at the most purely narrative part of the *Annales*, dealing with the period up to 725 (after which the narrative approach gives way to the annalist method), we see God mentioned on almost every page of the work (not counting – of course – the multiple time references starting with *anno ab incarnatione* and the like). Pippin II taking on his enemies is likened to David fighting Goliath.[117] His address before the battle of Tertry is full of pious references[118] and is strongly reminiscent of similar episodes in the Book of Judges. It is remarkable that the *Annales*' narrative on Pippin I contains much more references to (the help of) God than its account of the deeds of Charles Martel, whose glory – although clearly linked to divine providence – is rather painted in terms reminiscent of "imperial" symbols like the sun (*cf.* the Roman *Sol Invictus*): "Then just as the eclipsed sun gradually unveils its bright rays to the whole world, so Charles ... began to shine forth (on) a people suffering and almost despairing of hope".[119] A similar tone was not found before in any Frankish narrative work. Remarkable, too, is the fact that "God" is much more present than "Christ": again, apart – here too – from annalistic references like '*anno ab incarnatione Iesu Christi,* we find explicit references to the Saviour only in relation to the alleged recuperation of the kingdom under Pippin II's beneficial rule following Tertry.[120] In other cases references are to

115 On Fredegar: cf Wallace-Hadrill, *The long-haired kings*, 75: " It would not be surprising if (Fredegar) was ... a layman", as well as the accompanying footnote: "...the case for considering Fredegar a layman must rest mainly on what he does not say; a churchman might have ... interest at several points in the story which Fredegar allows to pass without comment". Also p. 86: "(Fredegar is) a chronicler without interest in ... the church". On the *LHF*: cf Gerberding, *The rise of the Carolingians*, 31.

116 On the *AMP* see chapter two, section two.

117 *AMP*, 1 and 2.

118 *AMP*, 8 and 9.

119 *AMP*, 20.Translation Fouracre & Gerberding. *Tunc veluti cum sol preclaros radicos eclipsin ad modicum passos cuncto exerit orbi, sic Karolus ... desperantibus de salute populis ... illuxit.*

120 *AMP*, 12 and 13.

God rather than to His Son. Finally, we find that the *Annales* refer to saints more often and/or explicitly than do Fredegar, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* or the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*: the references concern Arnulf, Leodegar, Furseus and Lambertus – at least three of whom have strong ties with Austrasia.[121] Thus, the Pippin I- and Charles Martel-episodes of the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, through their manifold and intense reference to God's help (or, when concerning good governance, to Christ), through their use of metaphors invoking the Book of Judges or the Book of Kings and through their alluding to "meaningful" saints, provide an early IXth-century account of the intensifying religious narrative and the change in devotion to which Austrasians were exposed in the VIIth and VIIIth centuries. It is also against this background of religious change that I interpret the letter of an anonymous bishop to a certain youthful king (see chapter two, section one) as a letter to young Sigebert III.[122] It fits the character of the times.

A final characteristic of the new narrative is the imperial tone which the *Annales* apply to Pippin I (*princeps*) and specifically Charles Martel (*... cum sol preclaros ... illuxit*) and which completes the ambiance of orthodox authority.
With the *Annales*, the tone is set for later Carolingian historiography, specifically Einhard and Nithard.[123] The great narrative of the Franks and their kings is henceforth set in a Christian ambiance. There is no more place for mystifications about a Trojan past: the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* was the last contemporary narrative to include these myths. In Carolingian times these were substituted by a Christian context.
The liturgical practice of *Laus perennis*, often occurring in monasteries with royal connections, entered Austrasia through Amatus at Remiremont and was soon to be found at Nivelles[124] and Ghent[125] – possibly also thanks to Dagobert I, who had been king in Austrasia and introduced the practice at Saint-Denis shortly after he took over in Neustria. There is also a liturgical focus in Austrasian hagiography and legend construction, *e.g.* in the fictitious report on the baptism of Sigebert III in the seventeenth chapter of the *Vita Amandi Prima*.

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121 *AMP*, 3, 5, 12 and 19 respectively. Arnulf's and Lambertus' Austrasian background is obvious. Furseus was the brother of Foilanus and Ultanus, who both were closely linked to Pippinid monastic foundations. Even Leodegar, although emphatically not an Austrasian, was closely linked to the "Austrasian" régime of Childeric II.

122 *Epistolae aevi Merowingici collectae*, 457-460.

123 Y. Hen and M. Innes ed., *The uses of the past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2000), specifically contribution by McKitterick, 'Political deology in Carolingian historiography', 162-174.

124 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano.*

125 *Vita Bavonis*, c. 4.

Section 5. Primary enemy / Missionary ideology

The "Vienna algorithm" provides for a process in which a primordial event and a subsequent change of religion are followed by the identification of, and combat against, a primary enemy. Of course, algorithms and other patterns should never be too rigidly applied to actual historical contingency. This is also true for the algorithm which is – tentatively – applied here to the VIIth- en VIIIth-century genesis of an Austrasian identity. All the same, the upheaval of 612/13 and the thorough changes in religious narrative and devotion in VIIth-century Austrasia appear to fit in. The current section will address the question whether a phenomenon may be identified which would correspond to the algorithm-concept of a common enemy, which presumably would have strengthened a sense of Austrasianness.

The answer to the question is affirmative in a sense. The *gentes* beyond the Rhine in Northern and middle Germany – Frisians, Saxons, Thuringians and, further East, Wends and Avars – were conceived as a common enemy for much of the period between Chlothar II and Charlemagne.[126] In the course of the VIIIth century, moreover, in southern Germany the Bavarians provided the Austrasians with reasons for warfare.

However, with respect to these peoples, the Austrasians faced an ambiguous situation, specifically where the degree of Christianisation was concerned. The Frisians and the Saxons were and remained pagan throughout the VIIth and (much of) the VIIIth century. The Thuringians probably were Christianised, to a degree.[127] The same is true of the Hessians, while in southern Germany the Bavarians may have been largely Christians.[128] Legend construction as well as actual events in the late VIIth and VIIIth century suggest that Austrasian ideology as it developed in response to this situation hardly differentiated between these various degrees of being Christianised. When the Northern *gentes* became the targets of hard-line, pioneering Christianisation, starting with Willibrord and lasting through the period of the subjugation of the Saxons by Charlemagne, Christianity in the South of Germany saw itself confronted with the ideological fall-out of this missionary zeal.[129] In the end a common paradigm determined the Austrasian perspective on the Eastern peoples. This was the missionary paradigm.

126 Austrasians warred with Eastern *gentes* under Chlothar II, Dagobert I and Sigebert III. Pippin II fought the Frisians. His son Charles Martel warred with Frisians, Saxons and Bavarians. Earlier, Sigebert I had waged war against the Avars.

127 Wood, *The missionary life*, 10.

128 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 307-310, on Bavarian and Hessan Christianism in the VIIth century

129 This was reflected in VIIth-century "Bavarian" hagiography. See chapter 3, section 2.

Effectively, the Austrasians met the challenge posed to them by the *gentes* on their eastern frontier by constructing a missionary paradigm which was, in a sense, a specific variety of the common enemy-concept of the Vienna algorithm. This missionary paradigm became a touchstone for Austrasian identity.

A missionary orientation has long been seen as an obvious and more or less permanent characteristic of the Frankish realm. It has been held that already Dagobert I had missionary ambitions and that there was continuity in this respect with the policies of the later Pippinid and Carolingian rulers.[130] However, this study proposes the conclusion that an actual missionary orientation of the Franks and of their rulers only came into being towards the end of the VIIth century and thus was a rather late phenomenon. It also was mainly an Austrasian phenomenon.

The further development of the "missionary narrative" is illustrative. We already saw[131] that Frankish evangelizing in the VIIth century probably aimed at restoring internal lapses of faith rather than at converting external pagan peoples. This was probably also true of the alleged preaching of Agrestius of Luxeuil with the Bavarians in the 620's, reported on by Jonas of Bobbio.[132] Yet Jonas, writing c. 640, speaks of *praedicare nationes* and *fidem in gentibus serere*, in both cases referring to Columbanus.[133] Although Jonas does not add an account of Columbanus actually doing missionary work, in his narrative he starts using the code words of missionary legend. It is the VIIIth-century legend of Amandus, as contrasted with his actual biography, which presents us with the first fully-fledged missionary epic; a fictitious epic, but also a very eloquent and influential one. The various versions of Amandus' Life, which date from between 755 and 782[134] (leaving aside Milo's version from c. 850), mention his alleged preaching among the Slavs and the Basques and reinterpret in a missionary sense his actual work in the Scheldt region, all of this following an (alleged?) stimulus by Saint Peter.[135] The *Vita Antiqua* also reports an intention by Amandus to travel as a missionary to the Anglo-Saxons.[136] Considering that this report dates from times when, conversely, Anglo-Saxon missionaries were increasingly active

130 Dagobert I's donation of Utrecht by Chunibert of Cologne has been seen as a proof of the king's missionary intentions, as was his support for Amandus' work in the Scheldt region. In chapter two I have pointed out the weak narrative basis for these assertions, as well as the lack of corroborative evidence. The clearest example of a missionary tradition projected backward in time is, of course, provided by the VIIIth-century language construction concerning Amandus.

131 Chapter 3, section 2.

132 See chapter 3, section 2; *Vita Columbani II*, c. 8 and 9.

133 *Vita Columbani,* I, c. 27.

134 Chapter 3, subsection 2.2

135 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 7, 12, 13, 16 and 20.

136 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 14.

in North-western Europe, this is a curious and almost ironic account, which may reflect a certain scepticism of the author of the *Vita Antiqua* towards the Anglo-Saxons.[137] Be that as it may be, we are left with at least two questions: why did Austrasian legend constructors – or: legend constructors working in an Austrasian context – construct missionary fiction, and what was the relation between this fiction and the actual missionary effort?

Mission, in the sense of (Christian) "mission to the pagan ... as envisaged at the end of Matthew's gospel" (Wood's definition)[138] was not a new concept to the Franks. The legend of the "Seven Apostles of Gaul" was widely accepted as the official account of the conversion of the Gallo-Romans in and following the time of Decius (249-250).[139] There had been a distinct Frankish contribution to the evangelisation of England, which contributed to the success of Augustine's mission from 597 onward.[140] Whether or not these concepts and contributions actually carried over into the Austrasian context can no longer be established.

However, a first tentative origin of what was to become Austrasian involvement with – and commitment to – Christian mission may be found in the spread of at least the spirit of *peregrinatio* in Austrasia. Columbanus visiting the Austrasian court before continuing his journey to Bregenz and ultimately to Bobbio, embodied this spirit. Amandus' life was presented as a *peregrinatio*. Foilan and Ultan arrived in Pippinid territory after long years of wandering. Remaclus arrived as a peregrine in Sigebert III's realm. And then there is the "duo" of Wilfrid of York and Dagobert II. Wilfrid's travels to Rome and throughout Italy, Gaul and Britain certainly show the outward characteristics of a *peregrinatio*, whereas his friend king Dagobert II had spent his youth on what could be (and was[141]) interpreted as a pilgrimage to Ireland and England. None of these wandering was a missionary, let alone that they were involved in a missionary programme, but their travels comprize a network spreading from Ireland and Northumbria to the borders of Germany and to Rome – and they shared a spiritual element, a certain transcendental quality. The travellers also all came from, settled in or at least passed through Austrasia and directly interacted with its aristocracy and often with its ruler.

137 Helvétius, 'The Vita Amandi Prima'. This appreciation of the *Vita Antiqua*'s possible attitude towards the Anglo-Saxon mission should be considered in context with – among others – the Life of Emmeram. See chapter 3, section 2.

138 Wood, *The missionary life*, 3.

139 Wood, *The missionary life*, 6 and *DLH*, I, c. 30.

140 Wood, *The missionary life*, 9-10.

141 *LHF*, c. 43. The narrative reports how Grimoald gave the young Dagobert to Dido of Poitiers, who went on a *peregrinatio* to Ireland. Thus, Dagobert participated in the *peregrinatio*.

None of these journeys was in the literary sense a missionary endeavour, although in later legend they have often been presented as such. The tendency to do this was particularly manifest in the context of the Lives of Amandus, Rupert, Emmeram and Corbinian. These Lives all date from a time when missionary work in Germany, starting with mission among the Frisians in the late VIIth century and continuing throughout the VIIIth century, had become a reality. The legend constructors of the Lives mentioned may well have felt the desire to come to terms with this intrusive missionary movement. For, of course, it was a movement mainly originating with Anglo-Saxons who, for reasons we will not go into, developed the desire to preach "the word of God to ... nations that had not yet heard of it, many of which nations ... were in Germany, from whom the Angles and Saxons, who now inhabit Britain, are known to have their origin".[142] It was this desire which in the end led to – among other things – the arrival of Willibrord at Pippin's court in 690. He was followed by numerous others.

Seen against this background of Anglo-Saxon zeal, the answer to the questions posed above – why was missionary fiction constructed and what was its relation to the actual missionary effort? – may now be proposed as: the fiction was written because a partially Frankish-based or related Christian mission emerged during the late VIIth and VIIIth century and the resulting missionary practice provided hagiographers, particularly in Austrasia, with an example to which they desired to model their narratives. Moreover, they were confronted by a missionary reality they needed to come to terms with. Yet this is only part of the answer. When addressing questions on identity and the genesis of identity, we at least need to address the question of why mission became part of the make-up of Austrasian identity.

One clue to the answer is provided by Einhard when he gives the reasons for Charlemagne's exhausting war against the Saxons. The first reason given concerns the fact that the "Saxons ... are given to the cult of demons and opposed to our religion ..."; only in second place comes the fact that they continuously disturb the peace: "Behind this were other causes, namely the fact that they were a continuous threat to peace...".[143] The priority given to the religious motivation for the war, even though possibly inspired by the wish to appear politically correct, is remarkable

142 Bede: *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, c. 9. Translation from J. Stevens (The venerable Bede, 'The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation and the Lives of St Cuthbert & the Abbots' (New York 1970).

143 *Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 7: *"...Saxones, sicut omnes fere Germaniam incolentes nationes, et natura feroces et cultui daemonum dediti nostraeque religioni contrarii ... Suberant et causae, quae cotidie pacem conturbare poterant..."*.

in a work which otherwise provides hardly any religious references.[144] Also remarkable is the direct connection made between the Saxon's paganism and Charlemagne's war against them. The fact that the Saxons became the object of forced conversion, as well as Alcuin's and Liudger's objections against such compulsion are, of course, well known and we will not go into those here. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that the author of the *Vita Amandi Prima*, writing about 782, when the war against the Saxons was well underway, introduced into Amandus' legend the notion of the saint's request to the king for (armed) royal support for his work among the "pagans".[145] It appears, then, that in the (later) VIIIth century a writer like the author of the First Life of Amandus could perceive a community of interest between, on the one hand, the king and, on the other, mission against neighbouring pagan *gentes*. The word "neighbouring" could be crucial in this context, considering that Einhard provides a religious motivation for warfare only in the case of the Saxons.[146] The memory of VIIth-century Austrasian kings acquired a missionary aura in the VIIIth century. It was the earlier author of the Older Life of Amandus whom we first see writing about the child Sigebert III allegedly being baptised by Amandus. The fictitious episode ties an Austrasian king to an Austrasian "missionary" saint. The fact that Sigebert could be credited with appointing Amandus as bishop at Maastricht and also founded the double monastery of Stavelot-Malmédy in the wilderness will not have diminished a possible missionary dimension awarded to the king's memory. Also the memory of Dagobert I acquired missionary colouring. He was the king to whom Amandus allegedly appealed to provide (armed) support for his work in the Gendt region[147] and already Fredegar had depicted Dagobert I as a king who inspired awe into the *gentes*.[148] Also, there is of course the actual massive missionary activity of the late VIIth and VIIIth century. Both phenomena contributed to the missionary orientation becoming a central element of the genesis of Austrasian identity.[149]

144 This observation goes for the *Vita* in general. More specifically, when discussing Charlemagne's wars with the Slavs, the Avars, the Huns and the Northmen (*Einhardi*, *Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 12-14), no mention is made of either their paganism or of any religious motivation for the wars against them and the *Vita* is also remarkably tolerant when describing Charlemagne's relations with Harun-al-Rashid (*Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 16).

145 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 13.

146 *Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, c. 7.

147 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 13; Significantly, the *Vita Antiqua* has no such refererence to the use of royal power.

148 Fredegarius, IV, c. 58.

149 A. Dierkens, 'Willibrord und Bonifatius. Die angelsächsischen Missionen und das fränkische Königreich in der ersten Hälfte des 8. Jh.' in: A. Wieczorek, U. Koch and C. Braun ed., *Die Franken, Wegbereiter Europas. Vor 1500 Jahren König Chlodwig und seine Erben* (Mainz 1996) 459-465 and Fritze, 'Universalis gentium confessio'.

We are led to the conclusion that, whereas many elements resulting from the VIIth-century genesis of Austrasian identity – self-consciousness with respect to the Western and Southern parts of the realm, a specific development of kingship, a more intense relationship with the sacred, a political attitude which was in essence aristocratic – carried over into the Carolingian IXth century as substantial characteristics of the realm, the Austrasian concern with mission possibly did as well.
The idea and concept of mission became important during the course of (later) Carolingian history and was by posterity considered as a prime inheritance of Carolingian times. For the genesis of an Austrasian identity, the ideology of mission had its function throughout. The spiritual conquests of men like Willibrord – a client of Pippin II and an ally of his son Charles Martel –, like Swidbert and like the two Hewalds, represented a sublimation of the archetypical war against the primary enemy – the pagans in the East, later – more specifically – the Saxons. It is the connection between Austrasia and Pippinid power on the one hand and a substantial Anglo-Saxon missionary effort aiming at the North of Germany on the other which, in combination with the Austrasians' acquaintance with the concept of the *peregrinatio* resulted in a powerful ideological blend which the hagiographers may have felt as being Austrasians' "manifest destiny".

Section 6. Some conclusions on the genesis of "Austrasianness"

In the course of the VIIth century, the Franks became more interested in their history. That is, if we are to judge from the occurrence of allusions, in their historiography, to ancient times and origins. These allusions, in the Chronicle of Fredegar, in the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and in *Historiae vel Gesta Francorum*, went way beyond Gregory's tentative report on Pharamond. Yet when we read about Merovech allegedly being sired by a quinotaur, about the alleged Trojan origins of the Franks, about their time in Pannonia and about legendary leaders like Pharamond, we are inclined to conclude that the Franks were more interested in a great narrative than in reporting on actual events and developments. They constructed an *origo gentis* (and *regum*) – in the same way as hagiographers, some generations later, constructed legends. And it was the narrative that counted, not the past as such.
We cannot be certain of why the Franks chose to identify themselves specifically as descendants of Trojans. The explanation proposed by

Wood[150] – that it was an expression of their respect for and competition with the Romans, who also considered themselves as latter day Trojans – is plausible enough and would provide a basis for the development of the Trojan connection as a diplomatic literary tradition. It would also make clear that the development of a Frankish identity in the VIIth and early VIIIth centuries was linked to these Trojan elements. Frankish known history was actually a short history – but the Franks could not have cared less: they found themselves the narrative which provided them with the depth of time they felt they needed.

In this study it is not so much Frankish identity as, rather, Austrasian identity which concerns us. In terms of identity, the Austrasians are a complicated case. They will have been conscious of a "Ripuarian" basis under their policy – of which we cannot say anything, except that it must have existed and that the Austrasians must have been aware of it. The existence of a Ripuarian kingdom was discussed briefly in chapter 4, section two. The Austrasians had their Merovingian and Trojan framework of reference in common with the Neustrians. From the early VIIth century onward, however, they underwent a specific process of genesis which was oriented on groups, networks and the region, not on any ethnic concept. There never were ethnic Austrasians.

This genesis of identity has in this study been addressed through developments concerning kingship, concerning the sacred and concerning the role of the aristocracy. In (later) Carolingian times the Austrasian process merged with the Frankish main stream and, while decisively contributing to imperial identity, was at the same time dissolved within it. The names "Austrasia" and "Austrasian" were disappearing by the late VIIIth century. Below, we will offer a number of conclusions on what specific characteristics of kingship, of the sacred and of the aristocracy say out about Austrasian identity. However, as the genesis of Austrasian identity as it has been set out in this chapter runs parallel to all of the other developments mentioned, let us first briefly sum up our findings on Austrasian regiogenesis as well as on its significance.

First we may conclude that it is possible to match actual developments in Austrasian history with the Vienna algorithm as it has been proposed by Wenskus and Wolfram. Starting from the basis of a "Ripuarian" frontier region and considering the specific dynamics between periphery and centre typical for the area, we may identify some important "Traditionskerne": the Austrasian court, leading families like the Pippinids, other nodes in the networks of elite groups. Such cores of tradition could function quite directly – cf the Pippinids as sponsors of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* – and in an indirect sense, as a catalyst for new religious developments and monastic foundations. The monastic

150 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 33-35.

foundations, which developed into centres where legend was constructed, became cores of tradition in their own right. Individual kings and leaders were judged on their adherence to tradition. A case in point is Pippin of Landen, confronted with the *zelus Austrasiorum* when he was thought to neglect the Austrasian commonwealth, restored to his position after he returned to the right path.[151] There were other Austrasian cores of tradition: family groups and clans like those of bishops Arnulf of Metz and Chunibert of Cologne or of duke Adalgisel, and agglomerations like Metz or Cologne, cities which were both episcopal see and royal residence. With the ascent of Pippin of Herstal the Pippinid "Traditionskern" began to overshadow all others and after "Tertry" its influence began to spread through Neustria and Burgundy as well. In the end it was the Carolingian dynasty which inherited the role of most of the other "Traditionskerne" and transformed this role into its imperial "manifest destiny", while founding Aachen as an essentially new topographical centre of gravity. By then, separate Austrasian elements had merged within the wider context, while repudiation of the Merovingian kings – either by leaving them to oblivion or through an active and conscious process of *damnatio memoriae* – had become common.

The role of the cores of tradition came to a much stronger expression as a consequence of the primordial event of 612/613 – the war which resulted in the take-over of Austrasia by Chlothar II. The role of Pippin and Arnulf in the take-over was probably crucial,[152] although we do not have the slightest idea on their motivation or what exactly they did. The new king paid lip service – at least – to the principle of royal electivity and to the traditional role of Austrasian aristocrats when he mentioned the *iudicium Francorum electorum* as the occasion to formalize new governance arrangements,[153] but we do not know whether at this momentous occasion the *iudicium* was actually effectuated. We have seen, however, that Chlothar's rule in Austrasia was not popular with the aristocrats there. The dissatisfaction led to an oppositional solidarity of an activist élite, which at two occasions (622/23 and 633) forced the Neustrians to concede the installation of a separate king in Austrasia. Seen from this perspective, the upheaval of 612/613 appears like a watershed between a respected if unruly Austrasia before the fatal years and, in the following period, an Austrasia that had to fight its way back and to reinvent itself. The new situation brought with it a stronger (expression of) Austrasian self-consciousness.

A next stage of the Vienna algorithm consists of a change of religion – which in the case of VIIth-century Austrasia can perhaps better be

151 Fredegarius, IV, c. 85.
152 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40.
153 Ibidem.

designated as a change in devotion. In Austrasia more than in Neustria the religious context changed during the VIIth century. Transmarine influences – at first Irish, later Anglo-Saxon –acted as a catalyst to this process. Thus, the period following 612/613 was not only characterised by a change of régime, but also by a change in devotion, which becomes tangible through – among other things – the development of a monastic topography and the emergence of strong positive ties between ecclesiastical engagement and political power. In Austrasia we see a positive relationship between politics and the sacred, as it is exemplified in the involvement of bishop Chunibert in royal government, in the cooperation between Grimoald and bishop Dido and Sigebert III's donation of royal land for founding monasteries. On a more specific level there is a peculiar connection between kingship and the sacred which becomes evident from the role of bishops like Arnulf, Chunibert and Amandus, and of new monastic foundations in relation to the king. A merger occurred in Austrasia between the grammar of kingship and the grammar of the sacred. There is a characteristic intensity to the Austrasian religious experience which may be considered part of the specific make-up of Austrasians and a result of their group-genesis. This intensity expresses itself in various components of what we might call the "Austrasian narrative": first, saints' Lives – from the *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis*, through the *Vita Arnulfi*, to the VIIIth-century missionary Lives (the various *Vitae Amandi*, the Lives of Rupert, Emmeram, Corbinian) with their legend construction; second, historiography as represented by the *Annales Mettenses Priores* with its Old Testament overtones; third, royal legislation – which explicitly addressed religion in the Edict of Paris (614, outcomes of a church council held back-to-back with a royal assembly) and allowed much room for Christianity in the *Lex Ribuaria*.[154]

Seen from an overall perspective, it is plausible to conclude that a process similar to ethnogenesis led, in the course of the VIIth and VIIIth century, to the development of an Austrasian identity. The various elements of the process – based, perhaps, on an awareness of (perceived) common interest of the elite networks, catalysed by dynamics between periphery and centre and by the primeval event in 612/613, finally expressing itself through a change and intensification in the religious experience and narrative – can be identified; also, their effect in Austrasian reality can be plausibly deduced from our source material.

154 Wood, *The missionary life*, 10, points out that *Lex Ribuaria* is "the most ostentatiously Christian of al the pre-Carolingian law codes".

VI. General conclusions

1. Introductory

In this study, I have undertaken an effort to determine in what way and to which degree the concepts "Austrasia" and "Austrasian" – the latter conceived as designation of an inhabitant of Austrasia – stand for a recognisable identity; or, rather, for a mind-set which we may call Austrasianness. The central questions I addressed is, what Austrasianness actually consists of, and what it contributed to the history of the Frankish or, where appropriate, Carolingian realm. In the following, I will summarize my reasons for concluding that there actually existed a mind-set which we may call Austrasianness and also go into its characteristics and its historic significance.

In this study I took the stand that Austrasianness, rather than to an ethnic-based identity or to a *gens*, was connected to a region, a territory, or set of territories.[1] One might speak of the formation of a "Kulturraum": a conscious as well as unconscious manipulative formation of the mental paradigm of a cultural area through political and social-cultural actions and actors.[2] There was no *gens* or nation of *Austrasii*, as there were Alemannian, Thuringian or Frisian *gentes*. Austrasians, or *Osterliudi* as they may have called themselves, were generally Frankish and akin to the Neustrian Franks. Yet among the Austrasians there developed a sense of common interest, a sense of commonwealth, of which traces can be found in contemporary texts an which can be analyzed within a paradigm which, in recent years, has become known as the "texts and identities"-approach.[3]

Austrasia was one of the constituent "Teilreiche" of the *Regnum Francorum*. These "Teilreiche" have long been considered to be the

1 Blotevogel, 'Auf dem Wege zu einer "Theorie der Regionalität" Auf dem Wege zu einer "Theorie der Regionalität". Die Region als Forschungsobjekt der Geographie' in: G. Brunn ed., *Region und Regionsbildung in Europa* (Baden-Baden 2002) 44-68. F.C.W.J., Theuws, 'Centre and periphery in northern Austrasia (6th-8th centuries). An archaeological perspective' in: J.C. Besteman, J.M. Bos and H.A. Heidinga ed., *Medieval archaeology in the Netherlands* (Assen and Maastricht 1990) 41-69.

2 J. Joachimsthaler, 'Die Literarisierung einer Region und die Regionalisierung ihrer Literatur' in: *Regionalität als Kategorie der Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main 2002) 19-49.

3 This approach is brillantly applied in the various contributions to Corradini et al., *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*.

mere products of dynastic expediency. In this view, the Merovingians repeatedly divided the *Regnum Francorum* among the successors of a dead king and, in determining the actual territorial division, followed no other principle than the need to reach a compromise between the various successors.[4] A closer look at the process throughout the Merovingian period, however, reveals not only a remarkable constant demarcation between Austrasia and Neustria, but also the persistency of some phenomena which were rather more characteristic of Austrasia than of the other "Teilreiche".[5] One of these was the close link between aristocratic influence and the principle of royal electivity as it manifested itself at royal successions or devolutions of royal power from Neustria to Austrasia.[6] The stability throughout time of Austrasia's demarcation with the West, moreover, is related to another characteristic of Austrasians: their preoccupation with the territorial integrity of their Austrasia. The fact that Austrasia itself consisted of various (sub)regions – and the reasons why the *Osterliudi* became the dominant elite in, at least, the regions on the left bank of the Rhine – would in itself present object for further study, which to an important degree has been addressed by Theuws.[7] In the current study, however, attention remained focussed on the territory as a whole and on the strong consciousness among Austrasians about which lands belonged to it. The conflicts concerning the ephemerous duchy of Dentelin corroborate the preoccupation of the Austrasians about the integrity of their "Teilreich".[8]

The stability of Austrasia's border with the West was not matched by that of the kingdom's Eastern frontier. From the time of its first separate king, Theuderic I (511-533), the Eastern "Teilreich" had massive interests beyond the Rhine, in Germany – both in the form of outright territorial possessions and in terms of spheres of influence. There in the East, however, we see nothing of the stability which characterised the kingdom's Western border. A constant effort was needed by the Eastern kings and their aristocrats to consolidate their position in Germany. In the end, this effort was not successful. After 639 the Austrasians lost much of their authority beyond the Rhine and only the Carolingians

4 E. Ewig, 'Die fränkischen Teilreiche im 7. Jahrhundert (613-714)', *Trierer Zeitschrift* 22 (1953) 85-144 (B). Reprinted in: H. Atsma ed., *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien. Gesammelte Schriften (1952-1973)* I. Beihefte der Francia 3 (Munich 1976) 172-230. A. Thacker, 'Peculiaris patronus noster. The saint as patron of the state in the Early Middle Ages' in: J.R. Maddicott and D.M. Palliser ed., *The medieval state. Essays presented to James Campbell* (London 2000) 1-24Thacker.

5 F. Cardot, 'L'espace et le pouvoir', chapter II.III, 'Le royaume d'Austrasie', 165-200.

6 ee chapter 4, subsection 4.2.

7 Theuws, 'Centre and periphery'.

8 Fredegarius, IV, c. 20, 37/38, 76; Mériaux, 'Thérouanne' 384; see also chapter 1, subsection 1.2

were to fully restore it.[9] The kingdom's vicissitudes in the East had direct consequences for the way Austrasian aristocrats viewed their kings. For various reasons these aristocrats wanted kings of their own – but a main reason among these was the perception that only a king of their own could adequately lead them in protecting and consolidating their interests in Germany. When after 639 Austrasian authority beyond the Rhine diminished, this reason lost its validity and Austrasians increasingly began looking westward to fulfil their ambitions. When, with the murder of Dagobert II (679) their bid for power against Ebroin failed, the concept of a king of their own became obsolete.

Austrasian identity or "Austrasianness" was thus strongly connected with territoriality and with the way in which Austrasian aristocrats looked at – and dealt with – kingship in their "Teilreich".[10] In the preceding chapters, therefore, an analysis was presented on the modules "kingship" and "aristocracy". There was, however, more to "Austrasianness". The region and its elite groups present us with specific characteristics in their perspective on and their dealing with sanctity, devotion, mission, monasticism – brief: with the sacred. Therefore these conclusions address this broad theme as a third module.

By way of "keynote" for what is to follow, three general observations may be presented which result from analyzing the three modules. The first is, that the Austrasian kings of the (later) VIIth century – Sigebert III, Childebert Adoptivus, Childeric II and Dagobert II – were by no means "rois fainéants", useless or failed kings.[11] The second is, that hardly any missionary activity emanated from VIIth-century Austrasia – despite legends about the missionary prowess of Austrasian saints like Amandus, Bavo, Rupert and others.[12] The third observation is the very basis for this study: The concept of "Austrasianness" in the period 600-800 was substantial to such an extent that it far surpassed any short-term motives for dynastic divisions.

2. Kingship

The narrative of kingship

In the VIIth century a conceptualisation concerning kingship developed in Western Europe. Isodore of Seville made explicit the concept of kingship as a *ministerium Dei*. It was quickly picked up in Francia, where

9 *LHF*, c. 41; Fredegarius, IV c. 48, 49, 68, 74, 77, 87

10 F. Cardot, 'L'espace et le pouvoir', chapter I.II, 'la conscience d'un territoire Austrasien' (53-74), chapter II.I, 'Le royaume' (123-138).

11 M. Innes, 'Introduction to early medieval Western Europe, 300-900 – the sword, the plough and the book' (Abingdon 2007) 297 ff.

12 See chapter 3, section 2.

an anonymous bishop took up the idea in a letter which he addressed to – probably – Sigebert III of Austrasia.[13] In the same period, in Ireland the relationship of kings with the sacred took on other forms – different and Irish, strongly inspired by the Old Testament – when kings became subject to consecration through the blessing by a *sapiens*; the best known instance is presented by Columba blessing king Aidan.[14] Such a blessing could also be withheld. Furthermore, *sapientes* claimed the power to prophesy on kings and their successors.[15] And in the Irish treatise *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* (Pseudo-Cyprian) the numinosity of kings was emphasised in that a king's actions and behaviour came to be linked to the general welfare of the realm, including natural phenomena (e.g. crop failure as a consequence of immoral rule).[16]

In various narratives the new conceptualisation of kingship in the VIIth century is reflected. Jonas of Bobbio's *Vita Columbani* presents the *rex inclytus* as the touchstone for good rulership, at the same time making clear that there certainly were bad kings, too, and that Theuderic II of Burgundy was one of these. Simultaneously, however, Jonas places the king as such – good or bad – above man's judgment. Only God may judge a king and He may be trusted to do so effectively (witness the fate of Theuderic and his offspring) – which to all intents and purposes makes kings sacrosanct and inviolate.[17] Crucial episodes from Jonas, through their inclusion in Fredegar's work and later in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* sponsored by relatives of Pippin the Short, came to be well-known in Austrasia and probably help explain the prudence of Pippin of Herstal, Charles Martel and Pippin the Short vis à vis the last Merovingians.[18] Conversely, the Carolingians had to acquire (or to get attributed) a degree of sacredness themselves before daring to assume the kingship.

Fredegar, as said, adopted episodes and presumably viewpoints of Jonas, but added touches of his own – although he, too, left the judgment of kings to God. Fredegar set standards of decency for kings, which had to do with chastity, with choosing the right counselors (and following their council), with piety. It is striking how he portrays Dagobert I as being an exemplary king as long as he lived up to these standards, listening to Pippin and Arnulf (and staying married to Gomatrude). It was only when the king left Austrasia for Neustria when things went wrong and Fredegar in his narrative consequently felt the need to express doubts on

13 *Epistolae aevi Merowingici collectae* , 457-460.
14 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 360/61; Ewig, 'Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter', 37.
15 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 191 ff.
16 *De duodecim abusiuis saeculi*.
17 *Vita Columbani*, I, c. 6, 27-29.
18 Fredegarius, IV, . 36.

the king's eternal salvation.[19] As it is, Austrasia is depicted by Fredegar as a morally healthy environment for Dagobert, who would have done better to stay there. Fredegar sets up decent Austrasian women like Bilichild and Ragnetrudis (Sigebert III's mother) as a contrast to the depraved example of Brunhild (also Jonas' "bête noire").[20] Judging from Fredegar, we might see Austrasia as an environment which is conducive to decent kingship.
A third narrative with relevance for the conceptual development of kingship is the *Liber Historiae Francorum*. In this Neustrian work, which is several generations younger than the works of Jonas and Fredegar, the king is credited with rather more sophisticated attributes than in the earlier accounts. A king must be *pacificus* and *iustus*.[21] The responsibilities of a king, which include supporting the church, imply that he abstain from profaning relics or oppressing the Franks. Above all, a king should avoid and prevent *bellum civile*.[22] The author of the *Liber* saw all these qualities in his own king, Childebert III (694-711), whom he praises as an exemplary king and whose death he reports in terms reminiscent of hagiography (*migravit ad Christum*).[23] We must keep in mind that this Childebert III ruled in the years following Tertry, when Pippin of Herstal is supposed to have been the real powerbroker in the *Regnum Francorum*. In a sense, we have here a case where Neustrian virtues are presented as being successfully maintained in the face of Austrasian "Realpolitik". Judging from – again – the prudence of the Carolingians vis à vis the later Merovingians, the fact that the *Liber* ascribes almost sacrosanct royal attributes to the just Merovingian king Childebert III may well have had its effects on the Austrasian leaders' thinking about and dealing with royal legitimacy.
The fourth and last narrative to be named in this context on the developing grammar of kingship are the *Annales Mettenses Priores*. The very emphasis of the book on the excellence of the Carolingians – e.g. through its annexation of Arnulf of Metz as an important kinsman of the dynasty[24] – betrays a certain uneasiness about the legitimacy of their kingship (an impression which is strengthened by the fact that Grimoald is obliterated from the narrative). The *Annales* are a very Austrasian work, both by provenance and by its content. At the same time, the *Annales* mark more or less the end of a separate "Austrasianness": henceforth Austrasia dissolves into the Carolingian realm. In the *Annales* we find, therefore, the last and ripest form of Austrasian thinking about kingship. Last, because the *Annales* mark a point in time after which significance

19 Fredegarius, IV, c. 58, 60.
20 Fredegarius, IV, c. 33, 59.
21 *LHF*, c. 42, 50.
22 *LHF*, c. 25.
23 *LHF*, c. 50.
24 *AMP*, c. 3, lines 17-20.

and content of Austrasia change or even disappear. Ripest, because they present us with the ideologized kingship which resulted from developments in Austrasia. Several points stand out. First is the *Annales* emphasis of the need for rulers to consult their followers. The discourse of the *Osterliudi* with their "king" – at the time, of course, Pippin of Herstal was not yet king, but the *Annales* gloss over this detail – is a central element in the narrative.[25] The Merovingians, in contrast, are represented as suffering from *superbia* and choosing bad counselors.[26] Within the discourse of the king with his chief followers we see the element of "correctness" emerge. The *Annales* provide explicit Old Testament parallels to describe context and history of the Carolingian heroes. This is reflected also in contemporary liturgy. The *Missa pro Principe* appears to presuppose a king very similar to an Old Testament warrior, the fact that the *Missa* appears to fit a context of impending war suggesting some link with a frontier region – although the *Missa* reflects a late-Merovingian tradition to include a prayer for the ruler in the liturgy, suggesting a sense of the importance of stability and legitimacy.[27] This and other examples of Old Testament orientation may reflect a late effect of earlier Irish influences on devotion in Austrasia.

Royal authority and aristocratic power

It was not only through narratives, however, that the VIIth-century conceptualisation of kingship showed itself. The Formulary of Marculf[28] makes a distinction between *gubernare* and *ministrare*, thus reflecting the works of Isidore of Seville. In Austrasia, throughout the VIIth century and even earlier (before the spatial entity "Austrasia" was mentioned by that name), we may discern a sense of royal self-consciousness and self-awareness in the texts connected to the kings. We may recognize this sense in the high-hearted letters which Childebert II addressed to the Byzantine court, preserved in the *Epistolae Austrasicae*,[29] as well as in the fact that most if not all VIIth-century royal legislation in Francia – a high-profile royal activity if ever there was one – is connected to Austrasia and to kings who specifically ruled Austrasia. An example is *Lex Ribuaria*, possibly promulgated in the wake of the take-over of Chlothar II in Austrasia in 613.[30]

Possibly the most characteristic development concerning kingship in

25 *AMP*, c. 4.

26 *AMP*, c. 5, 7 line 8-12, line 18.

27 Y. Hen and R. Meens ed., *The Bobbio Missal. Liturgy and religious culture in Merovingian Gaul* (Cambridge 2004). On a possible Bavarian context for the *Missa pro Principe* see the contribution of M. Garrison, 'The missa pro principe in the Bobbio missal',187-205.

28 Uddholm, *Formulae Marculfi*.

29 MGH *Epistolae* III, *Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini aevi* (I), 110-153.

30 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 116.

Austrasia is to be found in the strong aristocratic involvement in royal accessions and/or successions.[31] Even if this involvement was to a large degree ceremonial or symbolic in character, that would not change the fact that it is, time and again, explicitly mentioned in our narratives about Austrasia. The *iudicium Francorum electorum* promised by Chlothar II in 613[32] is reflected in later gatherings of the great right up to the accession of Pippin the Short in 751.

In the course of the VIIth century, we find two moments when kings appear to have explicitly taken into account the need to differentiate between the "Teilreiche" and, consequently, between their administrative needs. In 614, the famous clause 12 of Chlothar II's Edict of Paris regarding the appointment of judges in the different regions represents a recognition of the particularism of the "Teilreiche" – a fact which modern historiography often fails to appreciate.[33] A comparable provision is mentioned for the year 673, when king Childeric II authorised bishop Leodegar of Autun to implement a law reform that was intended to guarantee that judges would respect the law and custom of each *patria*.[34] The fact that Childeric almost immediately retracted this reform, apparently acting on the advice of his Austrasian counselors, suggests a deep-running difference of opinion between at least important groups of Neustrian and Austrasian aristocrats. It also reflects different conceptions of kingship in the two "Teilreiche".[35] Whereas in Austrasia even strong kings learned to accommodate the wilful aristocrats, in Neustria there was, as yet, no room for such accommodation. Childeric II was murdered as a result of his conflict with the Neustrians and Ebroin once again became the champion of a monarchical rather than an aristocratic conception of kingship. In Austrasia, the aristocratic conception prevailed and led, in the course of the VIIth century, to a *modus vivendi* between the king and his magnates. In spite of the conflictuous policies hinted at in the *Vita Arnulfi*,[36] Chlothar II and Dagobert I in the end managed to appease the Austrasians. They did this by granting the Austrasians their own kings – and this worked out well. When we see abbot Romaric of Remiremont meeting with the Austrasian mayor of the palace Grimoald (650) to confer about the consequences of the impending death of Sigebert III, we witness one of probably many meetings between

31 This is discussed in chapter 4, section 4.

32 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40.

33 *Chlotharii II. Edictum*, MGH, 1; *Capitularia regum Francorum*, II *Capitularia Merowingica* 9; on its appreciation see Ewig, 'Die fränkischen Teilreiche', 173; Fouracre, *Late Merovingian France,* 13; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 143.

34 *Passio Leudegarii*, c. 7

35 *Passio Leudegarii*, c. 7

36 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 16-20

aristocratic Austrasians to discuss matters of royal succession.[37] Our narratives transmit no similar instances about Neustria. Neither does Austrasia show a match for Ebroin's Neustrian style of governance. In this context, it is good to remind ourselves of the ways in which, in Austrasia, devolution of royal power was dealt with.[38] The devolutions of power to young Dagobert I (622/23) and Sigebert III 633) have just been called to mind. In 651 Grimoald arranged a succession which obviously satisfied the Austrasians: it was the Neustrians who interpreted it as a "coup" and managed to get their hands on the mayor and execute him. The *Visio Baronti*, which contains an implicit condemnation of the "coup", bears very much the signs of being the fruit of a Neustrian sphere of interest.[39] When in 662 the Austrasian queen-widow Chimnechild arranged the marriage of her daughter Bilichild with Childeric II, thereby securing the latter's accession of the Austrasian throne, we again see a succession arranged in the Austrasian way. Finally, in 675, Austrasian aristocrats got themselves Dagobert II as a king of their own, albeit for just a few years, which in itself is telling enough.

Prudently preparing for a new dynasty

In almost all cases, the succession arrangements in Austrasia led to effective reigns. Sigebert III is represented in the *Vita Boniti* as a king acting of his own power.[40] As such, he pursued an active "Klosterpolitik".[41] Childeric II is called *gloriosus dominus et rex* in the *Vita Landiberti Vetustissima*.[42] And the *Vita Wilfridi* suggests that Dagobert II, too, was an effective king. During his brief reign (675-679) his supporters – among whom Adalrich Eticho, several Austrasian bishops and probably Pippin of Herstal and Martin – waged war against Ebroin and Theuderic III, possibly with the intention to set up Dagobert as king of the whole of the *Regnum Francorum*.[43] This would present a break with the Austrasian tradition of asserting the king's authority preferably East of the Rhine instead of in Neustria, a break which could well be a consequence of the loss of this authority beyond the Rhine in the preceding period. When the murder of Dagobert II brought the Austrasian undertaking to an end, the grounds for the Austrasian aristocrats maintaining a separate king fell away.

The whole period of Austrasian kingship between the 630's and the

37 *Vita Romarici*, c. 8.

38 On these devolutions see chapter 2, subsection 4.2.

39 *Visio Baronti*, c. 17; Hen, 'The structure and aims of the Visio Baronti', *Journal of Theological Studies*, October 1996, Volume 47 Issue 2, 477 ff.

40 *Vita Boniti*, c. 2.

41 On his "Klosterpolitik" see chapter 2, section 5.

42 *Vita Landibert Vetustissima*, c. 5.

43 *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 28, 33; see also chapter 4, section 4.

death of Dagobert II presents us with an image of careful and prudent balance between ambitious aristocrats and effective kingship. It was the alliance with their aristocrats, or at least with the dominant faction of them, which brought the Austrasian Merovingians their legitimacy, together with elements like their "Klosterpolitik" and, of course, their Merovingian charisma. It helps explain why Austrasian aristocrats, not least the Pippinids, after the end of separate Austrasian kingship long maintained a very prudent relationship with the Merovingian kings in Neustria, even when these lost their effective power after Childebert III (695-711). The balance of legitimacy between aristocrats and kings also helps explain the somewhat forced efforts of later generations to (*ex post*) provide the Carolingians with a valid title to take over kingship. Often this aim was pursued by outright propaganda in our narratives. The *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, specifically the *continuationes*, which were sponsored with a view to legitimizing the take-over of 751, simply ignore the last Merovingians and name Charles Martel a *princeps* and a warrior with Christ, who displayed spiritual and military manifestations of piety.[44] The *Vita Hugberti* names Carloman a *vir Dei nobilissimus princeps* and also omits any reference to Merovingians.[45] The *Annales Mettenses Priores* compare Theuderic III to the Old Testament king Saul.[46] These examples illustrate a development from the traditional Austrasian balance of legitimacy to a new, more sacrally legitimated rulership – which, in its newness, yet represents the continuance of Austrasian practice by other means. It culminates in the representation in the various narratives of the 751 take-over: emphazing papal consent, as in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*,[47] in the *Annales Regni Francorum*[48] and in the *Annales Mettenses Priores*;[49] explicitly naming a *consecratio*, as do the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*;[50] or even reporting a biblical anointment, as in the *Annales Regni Francorum*[51] and in the *Annales Mettenses Priores*.[52] Specifically the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* – significantly – refer to venerable Austrasian tradition: Pippin's accession takes place with consent and advice of all the Franks, including the bishops, *ut antiquitus ordo deposcit*, and Bertrada is included in the *consecratio*, to make clear that not just a man, but a whole family is being raised to royal status.[53] The tradition invoked is, indeed, an ideological construct,

44 Collins, *Die Fredegar Chroniken*; Fredegar, IV, *Continuationes.*
45 *Vita Hugberti*, c. 20.
46 *AMP*, 1.
47 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 33.
48 *Annales Regni Francorum,s.a.* 749, 750. *DCCXLVIIII.*
49 *AMP*, *s.a.* 750.
50 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 33.
51 *Annales Regni Francorum s.a.* 749, 750. *DCCXLVIIII.*
52 *AMP*, *s.a.* 750.
53 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 33.

involving as it does invented tradition and conscious modelling of actual historical components of kingship. Austrasian in all this is, apart from the prominent role of the aristocracy, also the explicit mention of ecclesiastical support and involvement.

3. The sacred

In the IVth century, following the gradual disappearance of Roman authority, the ecclesiastical organisation in parts of North-eastern Gaul decayed or disappeared.[54] The vicinity of the pagan world across the Rhine may have contributed to this decay. This state of things may paradoxically have contributed to the strong development of a proper Austrasian paradigm of the sacred. North-eastern Gaul, the later Austrasia, was geographically situated between the British Isles in the West and Germany in the East. From the West came influences which began as individual *peregrinatio*nes and much later developed into missionary expeditions. In the East lay the pagan lands, where lived the "target peoples" of the missionaries. Irishmen like Ultan and Foilan, who ended up in in Pippinid monasteries, were carriers of overseas influences. So was Amandus, himself a Gaul but susceptible to Irish concepts and also active as an Irish-style bishop before being appointed to the see of Maastricht. For a while, autonomous abbeys with Irish-style monastic bishops became important in Austrasia. The paradigm of the sacred resulting from these developments was characterised by the *ex post* creation of a missionary identity, by hagiographic legend construction focussing both on this missionary element and on a special relationship between saints and kingship, and by the emerging of an Austrasian topography of the sacred. In the following, conclusions related to these elements of the paradigm will be presented.

Construction of a missionary identity

In the VIIIth century, mission became a dominant phenomenon in Austrasia and the adjacent German lands.[55] Evidence from our sources strongly suggests that his reality coloured the later perception of earlier times. Bonifatius interpreted Dagobert I's donation of the Utrecht church to bishop Chunibert of Cologne in missionary terms.[56] Amandus came to be represented as an arch-missionary. To the constructors of missionary

54 Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, 114.

55 Wood, *The missionary life*, specifically chapter 1, 'The Christianisation of Europe, 400-1000', 1-24.

56 See chapter 3 section 2; W.S. van Egmond, 'Utrechts oudste kerk en Dagobert. Vraagtekens bij een brief van Bonifatius', *Millennium. Tijdschrift voor middeleeuwse studies* 24 (2010) 95-112

legend Amandus appeared a particularly apt saint to elaborate upon. He worked in Austrasia, the area where later the fall-out of Anglo-Saxon mission work was most clearly felt. He could be fitted with papal connections, which could be mobilised in rivalry with those of the Anglo-Saxons. And he could be linked to kings Dagobert I and Sigebert III, to which end an extra miracle was added to his legend.[57] Following the example of Amandus' legend, also the legend of other churchmen became subject to retrospective "missionarization". This is especially true of four men who worked in VIIIth century Germany: Emmeram, Corbinian, Rupert and Kilian.[58] Thus, in the VIIIth century hagiography in Austrasia and Bavaria constructed a missionary identity, in response to missionary activities deployed by the Anglo-Saxons and at the same time finding convenient reference points in the VIIth century which could be – and were – "annexed" to the new legends: Dagobert I became linked to Utrecht,[59] Amandus was represented as preacher among the pagans[60] and Rupert became the founder of Salzburg.[61]

Legend construction

Basic to the creation of a missionary identity, but also to other elements regarding the way Austrasians dealt with the sacred, are the various instances of legend construction which can be distinguished in the narratives. This study addressed a number of them. Jonas of Bobbio, in his *Vita Columbani*, introduced some motives which may have been inspired by Irish examples and recur in later narratives on Austrasia.[62] The importance of a holy man's blessing conferred on or withheld from a king and his posterity is one of them – and this is a motif which we find quoted by Fredegar where he reports Columbanus' conflict with Theuderic III.[63] It is varied upon in the *Vitae Amandi* in their account of the saint's relationship with Dagobert I and his baptism of Sigebert III.[64] It is also hinted at in the *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano* and the *Vita Romarici* where they report on the meetings between Grimoald and Dido and between Grimoald and Romaric, respectively.[65]

In relation to this, holy men's prophecies are deemed important. Also, the reverence with which Columbanus, according to Jonas,[66] on his long *peregrinatio*, was received by Merovingian kings and magnates is

57 On the legend construction concerning Amandus, see chapter 3 subsection 3.2.
58 See chapter 3 section 2.
59 Bonifatius, *Epistolae*, 109.
60 *Vitae Amandi Antiqua, I, II*, MGH SSRM 5.
61 *Vita Hrodberti*, MGH SSRM 6.
62 See chapter 3, subsection 3.1.
63 Fredegarius, IV, c. 36.
64 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, c. 15, *Vita Amandi I*, c. 17, *Vita Amandi II*, *I*
65 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano*; *Vita Romarici*, c. 8
66 *Vita Columbani, I,* c. 6, 24, 26, 27

mirrored in the reverence which, according to their legends, was awarded to Amandus, Remaclus, Emmeram, Corbinian and others by the various nobles and princes at whose courts they found themselves. These motives concerning the special status of holy men – which also reflects upon their monastic foundations and the worldly co-sponsors of these – are present in all the contemporary narratives and/or constructed legends about VIIth- and VIIIth-century Austrasia.
The legend constructed concerning Amandus is a case in point. He is presented as a *peregrinus* and monastic founder – a Gallic Columbanus, so to speak. Although we know from the *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis* that he had good contacts with the Pippinids,[67] his Lives gloss these over, preferring instead to emphasize Amandus' relationship with kings Dagobert I and Sigebert III.[68] Amandus' legend provides a paradigm for the relationship between kings and saints. It is a paradigm which developed in Austrasia and is reflected in hagiography referring to Austrasian saints. The baptism scene concerning Sigebert III is a key element of the paradigm, in that it emphasises mutuality: not only because the miracle affects both Amandus and Sigebert, but also because the saint, in exchange for his baptism act, receives licence to preach at will in the Frankish kingdom; no mention is made of preaching beyond the borders.[69] Another element of the paradigm is the notion of a saint's autonomy vis à vis a king – a notion reminiscent of the position of the *sapiens* in Ireland and apparent from the *Vita Prima*'s report on how, in the end, Amandus stands his own in his confrontations with the king.[70]

Saints and kingship
The cases of three VIIth-century Austrasian kings – Dagobert I, Sigebert III and Dagobert II – achieving rather dubious degrees of (belated) sainthood allow negative conclusions only. No Austrasian king acquired a fully-fledged cult immediately following his death[71] and therefore the cults which did – hesitantly – develop were late and did not contribute to the Austrasian paradigm of the sacred.

Topography of the sacred
The Vth-century decay of ecclesiastical organisation in North-eastern Gaul was followed by a restoration in the VIth. This resulted in the appearance in Austrasia, during the first half of the VIIth century, of a number of high-profile bishops: Arnulf of Metz, Chunibert of Cologne,

67 *Vita Geretrudis*, c. 2
68 *Vita Amandi Antiqua*, 14; *Vita Amandi I*, 17; *Vita Amandi II, I*
69 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 17.
70 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 17.
71 On the supposed sanctitity of Dagobert I, Sigebert III and Dagobert II see chapter 3 subsection 3.3.

Amandus of Maastricht. This heyday of bishops, however, was followed by a period characterised by bishops meeting with trouble.[72] Already Amandus had to give up the see of Maastricht,[73] Theodardus was murdered,[74] Lambertus spent years as a prisoner in Stavelot-Malmédy and was later also murdered.[75] In general, bishops in Austrasia after 650 lost position and authority. This apparent retreat of episcopal power was accompanied by the foundation of monasteries which deeply changed Austrasia's topography of the sacred. The change was both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative, in that monasteries and their abbots (or abbot-bishops) began to occupy the niches formerly reserved for diocesan bishops. Quantitative, in that the number of monastic foundations grew quickly, starting at the rim of Austrasia (Remiremont in the South, the foundations of the Meuse-Sambre-area in the West) and ultimately also filling up the heartland of the region (Echternach).[76]
Notwithstanding the fact that most monasteries were founded in wilderness locations, the phenomenon did not spread to the East of the Rhine, where wilderness was more plentiful than in Austrasia proper: there was a divide between East and West.[77] This reflected the loss of Austrasian authority (and interest) in the lands beyond the Rhine after 639 and the gradual reorientation of Austrasian leaders toward Neustria. In fact, despite their being located in relatively deserted or uncultivated areas, most new foundations lay close to – or had links with – centres of worldly power. In fact, monasteries were founded and sponsored to function as "powerhouses of prayer" on behalf of their sponsor rather than as outposts for missionary work.[78] Thus the Austrasian topography of the sacred, rather than providing the groundwork for Christianisation, formed a network through which were disseminated the notions of authority and correctness which emerged in Austrasia and developed fully in the Carolingian realm.

4. Aristocrats

The role and the position of aristocrats was decisive for the development of an Austrasian identity, of the "Austrasianness" which became the

72 See chapter 3 section 4.
73 *Vita Amandi I*, c. 18.
74 *Vita Landiberti vetustissima*, c. 4.
75 *Vita Landoberti vetustissima*, c. 5, 11-17.
76 The development of Austrasia's topography of the sacred is discussed in chapter 4 section 4.
77 Ewig, *Frühes Mittelalter*, 70-71.
78 This is explicitly recognised in the IXth-century *Vita Remacli* where, in *caput* 4, the founding of Stavelot-Malmédy is motivated as follows: *... Malmundarium seu Stabulaus, in quibus commanerent religiosi monachi, qui spiritualiter inibi Christo famularentur et pro statu totius regni et regis salute vel filiorum sive curam regni exercentium omnipotentem Dominum exorarent*.

characteristic mind-set of the North-eastern kingdom and eventually contributed to – and dissolved into – the mind-set of the Carolingian realm.[79] These aristocrats are depicted by Fredegar as a military elite and as a politically active group, which knew how and when to apply political pressure to get their own way.[80] In fact, the aristocracy of Austrasia consisted of a complex system of interacting networks, in which gradually emerged a sense of common interest.[81] The kingdom of Austrasia developed in the VIIth century into a commonwealth of Austrasianness, a "Kulturraum" territorially and mentally defined by its ruling collectivity. In the early VIIth century the Neustrian author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* unequivocally describes how, a century earlier, the Austrasians – the *Franci Superiores*, as he calls them, came together to set up Dagobert I as king.[82] It was a practice which, as we saw in chapters two and four, was quite usual in the Austrasian context and was not only followed at the accession of subsequent Austrasian kings but was also still reflected in the ultimate accession of the Carolingians to kingship. The *Annales Mettenses Priores* in the early IXth century still describe the aristocratic character of old Austrasia when they depict the relationship between the *Osterliudos* and their leader Pippin (of Landen) who led them to successful wars against the Sueves, the Bavarians and the Saxons.[83]

A clarifying perspective on the aristocratic "tastes" of Austrasia is offered by the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, the Fredegar-based historiography sponsored by the Pippinids as it has been reconstructed by Collins.[84] In chapter four a case was presented for considering the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* as a work which, although not Austrasian in origin, still reflects a strong Austrasian perspective. Based on this principle, it is possible to deduce from it a number of characteristics with regard to Austrasian aristocrats. The fact that the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, compared to older versions of its component texts, omits the mention of *reges crinites* and also shows more distance to bishops suggests an aristocratic audience – by now rapidly developing into a Carolingian audience – which looks in its history for aristocratic leadership (*duces*) rather than long-haired kings and also tends to keep its distance from the episcopal hierarchy – the latter not surprizing when seen in the

79 Cardot, 'L'espace et le pouvoir', specifically chapter I.II, 'La conscience d'un territoire Austrasien', 53-74.

80 See chapter 4 section 1.

81 F.C.W.J., Theuws, 'Centre and periphery in northern Austrasia (6th-8th centuries). An archaeological perspective' in: J.C. Besteman, J.M. Bos and H.A. Heidinga ed., *Medieval archaeology in the Netherlands* (Assen and Maastricht 1990) 41-69. Costambeys, 'An aristocratic community'. M. Costambeys, 'An aristocratic community on the north Frankish frontier, 690-726', *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1994) 39-62.

82 *LHF*, c. 41.

83 *AMP*, 4.

84 Collins, *Die Fredegar Chroniken*.

context of the loss of episcopal authority in Austrasia after 650 and the rise of monastic foundations sponsored by aristocrats.[85] Judging from the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, its audience prefers to see itself and its leaders as *viri illustri, viri industrii* and – perhaps above all – as military leaders.[86] They respect kingship as an institution – and this respect is maintained even when they may doubt the *idoneitas* of weak or failing kings. If necessary, they take their responsibility – even when this leads to support and provide justification for switch of dynasties. The *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* expect that its audience share its aversion against civil strife and take up its responsibility, next to the king, to prevent it.[87]
Thus, in our sources Austrasian aristocrats are represented as a politically active group – or network of groups. In the course of the VIth century their activism, it appears, became increasingly successful. The ultimate guarantee for the aristocrats was the fact that they could, to a large extent, co-decide on who was going to be their king in Austrasia. They made use of this possibility many times: in 622, in 633, in 651 (led by Grimoald), in 675 and ultimately in 751.[88] Also, all ambitious leaders in Austrasia defined themselves in relationship to the king – or to kingship, starting with VIth century pretenders like Munderic[89] and leading up to ever more sophisticated relationships between the leader or leaders and the king, as in the case of Pippin of Landen and Chlothar II,[90] Dagobert I and Sigebert III,[91] or the case of Grimoald and Sigebert III.[92] The typical Austrasian aristocratic leader can be characterised with the term "power broker". To become and to stay a power broker, an aristocratic leader needed a king as his patron, or at least effective contacts at court. When power broker Arnulf of Metz lost his grip on Dagobert I, he retreated from court and became a hermit.[93] When power broker Romaric had retreated into a monastery, he still met with Grimoald to discuss matters of state with him.[94] Pippin of Landen, another power broker, enjoyed high respect from many – but when "his" king Chlothar II left Austrasia Pippin soon got into trouble there.[95] Grimoald drew the consequences and manipulated a succession to ensure himself of an effective king of his own.
The development, in a dialectic with kingship, of aristocratic network

85 Chapter 4 section 2. On the tension between aristocratic political dynamics in Austrasia and traditional structures like dioceses see Cardot, 'L'espace et le pouvoir'.
86 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 20, 21, 34.
87 *HGF* (= Fredegarius, IV, *Continuationes*), c. 8.
88 See chapter 2 subsection 4.2.
89 *DLH*, III, c. 14.
90 Fredegarius, IV, c. 40.
91 Fredegarius, IV, c. 47, 75.
92 *Additamentum Nivialense de Fuilano*, as interpreted by Gerberding 1987.
93 *Vita Arnulfi*, c. 20, 21.
94 *Vita Romarici*, c. 8.
95 Fredegarius, IV, c. 61.

power was, of course, a contingent process. The fall of Grimoald and the ensuing crisis – which offered men like Gundoin and Vulfoald unexpected chanches – make this clear. However, the actual course of history in the period 600-800 strongly suggests that leaders who respected the usual checks and balances had better chances to succeed. Gundoin, the *tirannus* in the *Annales Mettenses Priores* who murdered Ansegisel, perished himself by the sword.[96] Vulfoald lost his power when "his" king Childeric II and his queen Bilichild were murdered by Neustrians for having disregarded the political *mores*. Vulfoald's policy apparently did not match the balanced dealing between aristocrats and kings which had long been the hallmark of Austrasian politics.[97] He may have been an Austrasian counterpart of his Neustrian colleague Ebroin who, too, disregarded checks and balances. There were other sometimes marginal leaders, such as Adalrich Eticho, in the 670's who did not care for traditional forms of power brokerage. However, when leadership fell to Pippin of Herstal, tradition revived. Following Pippin's victory at Tertry in 687, the prudent power play of Austrasian aristocrats began increasingly to be felt in Neustria.[98]

To conclude this subsection on Austrasian aristocrats some observations are in order. The first is, that in Austrasia we can discern some traces of a duality between an aristocratic tradition and royal authority, a duality which makes it necessary to look for balance and legitimacy. At times, kingship in Austrasia seems less self-evident than in Neustria or Burgundy. This could well reflect the concept of Austrasian kingship with specific Austrasian traditions as suggested by Cardot.[99] The duality was to outlast Austrasia. The second observation is a reminder of the close link, in Austrasia, between the gathering of the great and royal successions. Austrasian aristocrats knew how to effectively play the card of electivity, thus unknowingly preparing for the moment when a new dynasty had to be legalised. The final observation concerns the balanced dialectic between aristocrats and royal power which, time and again, but not without difficulty, can be learned from our sources. Take the example of Dagobert II, the king of whom we know almost nothing – but of whom we may assume, judging from the *Vita Wilfridi*, that he was invited and accepted as king by the Austrasian nobles, that those nobles – rivals so far – had formed a coalition (including some bishops?) and that they supported him in a war against Ebroin. The balance seemed to work once more – until the king was murdered.

96 *AMP*, 1.
97 *Passio Leudegarii*, c. 7, LHF c. 45.
98 On the actuel process of this power play see Gerberding 1987.
99 Cardot, 'L'espace et le pouvoir', 123-131, 263-273.

5. The paradigm of ethnogenesis

To conclude: in the period between 600 and 800 there emerged in the North-eastern territories of the *Regnum Francorum* among its elite a mind-set which we may call "Austrasianness". It has been analyzed by studying how in Austrasia concepts of kingship, ways of dealing with the sacred and the role and attitude of an aristocracy presenting and defending its interests developed. The grammar of kingship is the central phenomenon here: it influenced and was influenced by the sacred, and it took on a specific Austrasian character in its dialectic with the aristocracy. When a regional Austrasian kingship disappeared after 679, this dialectic continued and further developed in a subtle play of politics between aristocratic leaders (initially the Austrasian Pippinids, but soon committing wider circles of the Frankish elite) and the kings of the *Regnum Francorum* residing in Neustria. The dialectic contributed to the conditions under which the change of dynasty in 751 could take place and after this continued to determine the Carolingian system of governance, in which the king exerted authority in the sphere of the sacred and remained at the same time in constant dialogue with the realm's nobility. In chapter five of the study we have seen that concepts from Wenskus' and Wolfram's ethnogenesis paradigm[100] can be applied for developing an analytical framework concerning the emergence of "Austrasianness". This view is strengthened by the fact that the emergence of "Austrasianness" appears to match with the views of Halsall on the transformations of the year 600 and with the observations of Theuws on centralizing developments in northern Austrasia which, in Theuws' view, is indicated by the rise of the name Austrasia.[101]

The analytical framework reflects the process through which the Austrasians, from c. 600 onward, could develop their characteristic mind-set which we may call "Austrasianness" – or an Austrasian identity. Although the Franks, and the Austrasians, actually had only a "short history" to look back upon – it reached not back much farther than Chlodio, who ruled (part of) the Salians in c. 430 – Fredegar and the *Liber Historiae Francorum* provided an extension of the perspective by incorporating in their narratives (differing) accounts of the alleged Trojan origin of the Franks.[102] Towards the end of the VIIIth century, the Pippinid-sponsored *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, by adhering to the version of Dares Phrygius, gave a more aristocratic colouring to this Trojan *origo gentis*.[103] The development of the theme matches with

100 Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*; Wolfram, *Das Reich*.
101 Halsall, CMSA-lecture 2012; Theuws, 'Centre and periphery'.
102 Fredegarius, III, c. 2; *LHF*, c. 1.
103 Collins, *Die Fredegar Chroniken*, 83 ff.

the genesis of "Austrasianness". It provided some elements of "historic" content to an emerging mind-set which, rather than on ethnicity, was the result of competition among elite networks and of the specifically Austrasian dynamics between periphery and centre.[104] For our analytical framework, however, this content is of secondary importance. More important is the occurrence in Austrasia of four phenomena which match four factors from the "Vienna algorithm" on ethnogenesis, namely cores of tradition, a primordial event, a change of devotion and a foreign problem to focus upon. These phenomena provide the building blocks for the analytical framework on the emergence of "Austrasianness".[105]

In Austrasia the cores of tradition which stimulated and carried "Austrasianness" were the king and, later, royally sponsored monastic foundations. Next to the king, elite families carried on traditions and, through founding monasteries themselves contributed to the emergence of centres which, by producing historiographical and hagiographic narrative, disseminated tradition throughout its audience among these same families. In the preceding chapters has been set out how, in various ways, the resulting narratives contributed to the development of a specific mind-set.[106]

The primordial event for Austrasia was the war of 612/13. The unexpected outcome of this war – a take-over by Chlothar II – was a deception to many Austrasians until the restoration of a separate kingship redressed the situation. It is characteristic that, as soon as the devolution of power from Neustria to Austrasia had taken place, Austrasians once again accepted responsibility for the governance and defence of the East. Also, in the wake of 612/13, royal legislation gained in importance in Austrasia.[107]

The regime change of 612/13 may have in itself contributed to a more "Columbanian" orientation of Austrasia.[108] Be that as it may, a change of devotion in the "Teilreich" is clearly discernible in the VIIth and VIIIth centuries. Our narratives suggest a growing awareness of concepts on the blessing of kings (or withholding such blessing) and on prophesying. The new monastic foundations changed the religious topography of Austrasia and began to produce religious content. In the emerging Austrasian religious narrative we may discern the reflection of a synergy between saintliness and politics, in that the grammar of kingship and the grammar of sanctity absorbed elements from each other. This is possibly most clearly visible in the development of the legend of Amandus. Such legend construction in itself provides a paradigm for Christianity in Austrasia, e.g. for the way it copes with the missionary activities beginning in the

104 Theuws, *Centre and periphery*.
105 On the Vienna algorithm see chapter 5 section 1.
106 Chapter 5 section 2.
107 Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 116.
108 See chapter 5 section 3.

late VIIth century. Austrasia was strongly affected by this mission and this is reflected in its religious narrative. Our hagiographic sources, at any rate, take for granted an audience which was interested in and in favour of missionary work. Missionary legend was projected backward and the *peregrinationes* of a Columbanus or an Amandus were reinterpreted as missionary journeys. VIIth-century Austrasian kings posthumously receive a missionary aura. This missionary fiction was written to help audiences come to terms with actual missionary work going on in the VIIIth century, which may have caused many an identity crisis among Austrasian and German Christians. Thus, legend constructed in VIIIth-century monasteries in the North-eastern frontier region of the Frankish kingdom contributed to the development of an Austrasian "Kulturraum" which, although the kingdom of *Auster* was but an ephemerous phenomenon on the map of early medieval Europe, provided the habitat for an identity, an Austrasianness, that brought cultural and – to a degree – political continuity to the period that saw the transition from Merovingian to Carolingian rule and laid the foundation for the next centuries. In the course of this transition, Austrasianness dissolved into a broader Frankish-Carolingian identity to which, however, it added its distinct contribution regarding thinking about kingship, dealing with the sacred and accommodating the aristocracy.

Summary

The kingdom of the Merovingian king Clovis I (481-511) was divided among his sons after his death. This division of the *Regnum Francorum* persisted during the VIth and most of the VIIth centuries, apart from some rare occasions when the kingdom was temporarily reunited under one king. In fact, *Francia* remained for most of the Merovingian period divided in three kingdoms: Neustria in the West, Austrasia in the Northeast and Burgundy in the Southeast: the *tria regna*. In the South, the vast area of Aquitaine was divided among the three kings.
Despite the dynastic division, the kingdoms of the Franks were perceived as a whole: the territory of the Merovingian dynasty. At the same time, each of the different parts of the territory had its own characteristics. This study addresses the specific characteristics of Austrasia and proposes the view that these Austrasian characteristics – generically indicated as "Austrasianness" – not only contributed to the territory's autonomy under its own Merovingian kings, but also were strengthened by this autonomy and gradually led to the development of a specific Austrasian "Kulturraum" whose features strongly influenced the Carolingian world as it arose during the VIIIth century.
In this study, the development, characteristics and significance of Austrasianness are addressed through three approaches. The first of these concerns kingship. In Austrasia, a specific "grammar of kingship" developed which carried over into Carolingian times. The second approach, closely connected with kingship, concerns the way in which Austrasians dealt with the sacred and increasingly constructed hagiographic legend which contributed to the way they perceived themselves. The third approach is through an analysis of the Austrasian aristocracy in its relation to kingship and the sacred. One conclusion suggested by this analysis is that Austrasian aristocrats attached much value to having a king of their own – until, that is, royal Merovingian influence in Germany decayed (after 639). This deprived Austrasian kingship of much of its vitality and henceforth the Austrasians started to assert themselves at the Neustrian court.
As is explained in chapter one, the character of this study brings with it that it is mainly based on narrative sources – contemporary or nearly so. The most important of these are the Chronicle of Fredegar, the

Liber Historiae Francorum, the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*[1] and the *Annales Mettenses Priores*. In addition to these historiographical works, a number of saints' lives (among these the *Vita Columbani*, the various *Vitae Amandi* and the *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis)* have been used, as well as several other sources, some of them non-narrative. In the analysis of these texts the approach was applied which was developed in the context of the "Texts and Identities"-project as it was undertaken by Mayke de Jong and others.[2]

Chapter two addresses the grammar of kingship as it developed in Merovingian Austrasia. One aspect of this development – which was not restricted to Austrasian kingship – is the increasing conception of royal office as a *ministerium Dei*, which is connected with ideas formulated by Isidore of Seville. From Ireland, elements of royal numinosity were introduced into continental kingship. This is evident in the work of Jonas of Bobbio, whose *Vita Columbani* – well known in Austrasia if only through the work of Fredegar – implicitly emphasizes the inviolability of a king in human terms: only God may judge and punish kings. At the same time, Jonas also hints that a king's moral stature may influence the fate of a whole commonwealth. Fredegar, who quoted extensively from Jonas and whose work was well known in Austrasia (and was to be "reissued" by Pippinid aristocrats in the later VIIIth century as the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*) appears to apply similar views to Dagobert I when he compares that king's outstanding rule in Austrasia with his later years in Neustria, on which he is highly critical. In fact, Fredegar appears to suggest that conditions in Austrasia, where aristocrats provided their kings with good counsel, were conducive to decent kingship. Two younger narratives, the *Liber Historiae Francorum* and the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, present us with images of kingship which approach saintly or biblical concepts. Specifically the *Annales*, which are a very Austrasian work and which associate their Carolingian protagonists with Old Testament kings, bear evidence to the final outcome of the "liturgification" of Austrasian kingship: it was a development which enhanced the esteem in which the Austrasians held their Merovingian kings and which, in the end, obliged the Carolingians to act very prudently when they began to assert their own royal aspirations. Before that time, when Merovingian kingship was still the norm, a dialectic relationship had developed between Austrasians and their kings which contributed to a proud Austrasian self-consciousness which was already

1 The *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, which at first sight appears to be just another version of Fredegar's chronicle, has been identified as a historiographical work in its own right by Collins (*Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, Hanover 2007).

2 R. Corradini et al. ed., *Texts and identities in the Early Middle Ages*. Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 12 (Vienna 2004), introduction by Mayke de Jong, Rosamond McKitterick, Walter Pohl and Ian Wood.

apparent in some of the *Epistolae Austrasicae*, the late VIth-century letter collection. It is the kind of self-consciousness which may also be reflected in royal legislation, notably *Lex Ribuaria* and the edicts of Chlothar II (614) and Childeric II (673) and probably also in liturgy. Judging from the sources, one may suppose that Austrasian kingship was based on aristocratic consensus, as became clear in the series of devolutions of royal power from Neustria to Austrasia throughout the VIIth century. Also the problematical rule of Childebert Adoptivus (651-662) may be better understood from this perspective. In the Austrasian "Kulturraum", the aristocratic influence on who was to be king came close to a degree of electivity. This dialectic relationship between the king and his magnates was to survive into Carolingian times.

Kingship in Austrasia was also shaped by its relation with the sacred. Austrasian royal "Klosterpolitik" was one of the more tangible aspects of this relationship which went, however, much further. In chapter three of the study is described how, throughout the VIIth and VIIIth centuries, a paradigm of the sacred became an increasingly important dimension for both the Austrasians' self-conception and Austrasian royal authority. The fact that, in the tumultuous Vth and VIth centuries, the Christian infrastructure of Austrasia had developed lapses and lacunae, as well as the presence of pagan *gentes* on the kingdom's Germanic frontier, made the area sensitive to overseas Christian influences from Ireland and Britain. One of the notable results of these influences was the *ex post* construction, in VIIIth-century hagiography, of a missionary identity for VIIth-century saints and their royal sponsors, as in the cases of Columbanus and Theudebert II or Amandus and Dagobert I. The legend construction concerning Amandus is rather effusive, not restricted to missionary fiction, but also honoring the saint with an unfounded account of his miraculous baptism of Sigebert III. However, VIIIth-century legend did not correspond with actual missionary activity in the VIIth century. This did not hinder it from emphatically coloring Austrasian self-perception in the VIIIth century – quite possibly as a response to the growing influence of Anglo-Saxon missionaries from the late VIIth century onward. Already some time earlier, the grammar of kingship in Austrasia had become sensitive to the application of concepts introduced from Ireland regarding the relationship between kings and spiritual leaders. Seen from this perspective, spiritual leaders could bless kings – or withhold their blessing, as in the case of Columbanus refusing to pray for Theudebert II's victory at Zülpich (612). Prophecies could spell ruin to kings and their progeny. The concept of penance became important. And a king like Dagobert II, who had spent his youth in Ireland on what might appear to many as a pilgrimage (*peregrinatio*) and later was treacherously murdered, may even had acquired a degree of sanctity – as may have been the case for his father and grandfather.

Unfortunately, the proof for spontaneous cults for these kings is inconclusive and the textual witnesses as we know them stem from a later period. We can, however, be certain of the growth of a symbiosis between royal and spiritual authority in VIIth-century Austrasia. The involvement of bishop Dido of Poitiers with the royal succession of 651 is a case in point, as is the commitment, from the 640's onward, of the royal court to sponsoring new monastic foundations. Through these foundations, the Austrasian "Kulturraum" developed a new topography of the sacred, based on monasteries as "powerhouses of prayer", where the observance of liturgy contributed to the *stabilitas regni* and added a dimension of devotion to Austrasianness.

Aristocrats were deeply involved in sponsoring monastic foundations. Within the dialectic between king and magnates the element of the sacred increasingly set the tone. Yet this was only one aspect of the relationship. From the analysis of the Austrasian aristocracy in chapter four it becomes clear that Austrasian aristocrats were very activist, both in a political and in a military sense. The name *Austrasii* primarily designated a military elite, the leading collectivity of the kingdom of *Auster*. Passages in the *Annales Mettenses Priores* closely link the *Osterliudi* (as they are named here) to a paradigm of war and conquest. Perhaps the truest portrait of Austrasian aristocrats may be found in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, the Fredegar-based history sponsored by the Pippinids Childebrand and Nibelung in the 750's/60's. Judging from this narrative, Austrasian aristocrats respected kingship, but remained jealous of their prerogatives. They saw themselves as military leaders. They preferred to remain aloof of ecclesiastical hierarchy (but sponsored monasteries and were sensitive to new forms of devotion). They disapproved of civil strife. Among the aristocrats typical of the region were Arnulf and Romaric, who combined political responsibilities with episcopal *viz.* monastic duties. Arnulf's initiative to invite Chlothar II into Austrasia (613) may well have been inspired by a desire to end the warfare that had recently engulfed Austrasia. And when Pippin of Landen followed Dagobert I to Neustria (c.630) this led to an outbreak of wrath among Austrasian aristocrats who suddenly lost their influence at court – a situation which Dagobert (and Pippin) had to remedy by installing young Sigebert III as king at Metz. This is an illustration of the fact that all faction politics in Austrasia essentially was about having or gaining access to the king – and that aristocratic opposition was an Austrasian characteristic.

Perhaps the clearest instance of how Austrasian aristocrats dealt with kings and kingship is presented by the short rule of Dagobert II (675-679) who, fetched back by them from his Irish exile, was set up as their king and leader in an ill-fated war against mayor of the palace Ebroin of Neustria. The fact that after the murder of Dagobert II no new Austrasian king was raised on the shield followed from the Austrasian defeat at

Lucofao (679), but also was a consequence of the loss of Austrasian royal authority in Germany, already mentioned before. Pippin of Herstal and his followers realised that, after this loss, Neustria offered better chances for their ambitions than Austrasia. Pippins victory at Tertry (687), where he turned the scales on the Neustrians, became the starting point of Pippinid power deployment, a process which made Austrasianness into the dominant mind-set of the Frankish kingdom and at the same time causing it to be dissolved in a wider, Carolingian, context.
In chapter five of the study, the development, throughout the VIIth and most of the VIIIth centuries, of Austrasianness is set off against the paradigm of ethnogenesis as it has been proposed and/or applied by Wenskus, Wolfram and Pohl.[3] Although in the case of Austrasia this development represents a process of regiogenesis rather than ethnogenesis – the Austrasians were not an 'ethnos' –, linking the various elements of the paradigm to the actual genesis of Austrasianness proves enlightening. All of these element – the "Traditionskerne" around which identity may crystallize, the "primordial event" that acts as a catalyst, the change of devotion that often accompanies the process and the presence of an external challenge that stimulates the growth of a common identity – find their counterpart in actual phenomena in Austrasian history: kingship an court as well as aristocratic families and their monastic foundations provided cores of tradition, the war of 612/13 and the resulting political changes served as primordial event and these elements, together with external influences on Austrasian Christianity led to a marked change of devotion characterized by an increased focus on orthodoxy, correctness and penance. The external challenge was represented by the growing VIIIth-century fixation on mission among the pagan *gentes*, which hagiography retrospectively also attributed to VIIth-century actors.
The study leads to a number of conclusions concerning Austrasianness. It identifies the persistency of some elements which were rather more characteristic of Austrasia than of the other Frankish territories. One of these was the close link between aristocratic influence and the principle, as distinct from the practice, of royal electivity. Another was the dialectic between Austrasia and the territories and peoples beyond the Rhine. Kingship in Austrasia was strongly influenced by this dialectic. It also was rather stronger than has long been thought: Sigebert III and Dagobert II certainly were no "rois fainéants". Austrasian kingship, in its strong links with the sacred, prepared the model which was adopted by Carolingian

3 R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung. Das Werden der frühmittelalterichen gentes* (Vienna 1961); H. Wolfram, *Das Reich und die Germanen. Zwischen Antike und Mittelalter* (Berlin 1990); W. Pohl, 'Strategies of distinction' and 'Telling the difference, signs of ethnic identity', in: W. Pohl and H. Reimitz ed., *Strategies of distinction. The construction of ethnic communities, 300-800* (Leiden 1998).

rulers. Hagiography helped construct the narrative which underpinned this royal identity. Austrasian kings, their aristocratic counsellors and followers, Austrasian saints and monasteries helped construct the "Kulturraum" which in the end reintegrated the lands beyond the Rhine into the Frankish world and formed the substrate of Carolingian culture.

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